Marital stability : a qualitative psychological study of Jewish couples

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MARITAL STABILITY: A QUALITATIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF JEWISH COUPLES

a dissertation

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to identify significant marital themes in 12 upper-middle class Jewish couples married a minimum of 20 years, and whose children were at least 18 years old. Each of the men in the sample possessed a college degree. Six women attended college and the remaining six had earned a high school diploma. The researcher interviewed each spouse separately concerning three periods in his/her marriage: the beginning years, the child rearing years, and the years after the children left home. The researcher explored the influence of a number of variables on the marriage: the couple's relationship, external factors, and styles of relating. Developmental transitions and crises experienced by the couple as well as the influence of biological, psychological, and social factors also were evaluated.

Each interview was audio-taped and transcribed. Interviews were then independently scored and coded for significant themes by the researcher and a male counterpart. Consensual agreement on the scoring was reached in all cases by the raters. Interrater reliability was .90. HyperRESEARCH software was utilized to assist in data organization and analysis.

Fourteen themes emerged from the data. Of these 14, four were pre-marital themes: initial attraction, certainty about spouse, family support, and expectations about the marriage. Themes encompassing relationship variables included communication, roles, relatedness, and stability. External factors influencing the marriage included the extended family, finances, and culture and religion. Developmental transitions, crises, and biological, psychological, and social factors also provided meaningful data in the assessment of marital stability.

From these themes, four additional findings were identified: satisfaction, gender differences, complementarity, and curvilinearity. These findings were observed in the majority of the sample. The relationships of these findings to the literature on marital quality and stability were provided. Suggestions for further research were identified.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background of the Study

Marriage has undergone many changes over the last several decades. While many of these changes may be traced directly to the rise of the women's movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Bjorksten & Stewart, 1984), the scope of the transformation belies such a simple interpretation. There are now more married couples without children, more remarriages following divorce, more couples delaying their first marriages, more dual-income families, longer courtships and more intimacy during courtship (Bjorksten & Stewart, 1984). It is clear that marriage roles as well as the panoply of personal, social and financial expectations of marriage are continuing to undergo change (Zube, 1982).

Increased life expectancy presents a significant change in that more couples are now married for longer periods of time (Ade-Ridder, 1985). As married couples' lives extend into their sixties, seventies, and eighties, there is value in identifying the significant elements which contribute to marital stability and satisfaction, not only to the direct benefit of couples whose children have left home, but also to the benefit of younger married couples in the context of their need to form realistic expectations about their prospective lives together. And while the professional literature has focused primarily on marital quality, conflicted marriages, and on the experience of couples married for relatively short periods of time, there remains a continued need to focus on the experiences of longer-term marriages and to reassess the

measurements of marital quality and stability which are critical to understanding how couples live and relate (Lewis & Spanier, 1979).

The benefits of marriage have been identified and supported in the literature (Glenn & Weaver, 1981; Kobrin & Hendershot, 1977; Lauer & Lauer, 1986; Lauer, Lauer, & Kerr, 1990): marital satisfaction contributes more than any other factor to a general sense of happiness; compared with other groups, married couples are significantly happier (Glenn & Weaver, 1981). Marriage contributes positively to the physical and mental health of the individual (Lauer & Lauer, 1986); death rates are significantly lower for married individuals than for unmarried individuals (Kobrin & Hendershot, 1977); married individuals are less likely to suicide and receive less psychiatric care than do non-married individuals (Lauer, et al., 1990). Both marital stability and satisfaction make significant contributions to these outcomes (Lauer, et al., 1990).

Several factors contribute significantly to marital quality: effective communication patterns, happiness, perceived equity in the relationship, a long courtship period so that marriage partners know one another more intimately, and agreement between the individuals on a wide range of issues (Hicks & Platt, 1970; Lauer et al., 1990; Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Roberts, 1979). Marital quality is addressed more frequently in the literature than is marital stability though the latter is more easily measured (Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Roberts, 1979). The literature documents a strong correlation between marital quality and marital stability (Kelly & Conley, 1987; Lewis & Spanier, 1979), and each of these measures of marital adjustment are explored in this study.

The important relationship of individual developmental stages to marriage has received little attention in the literature. A number of theorists have discussed the existence of developmental stages in adulthood which have biological, sociocultural, and psychological components (Cowan, 1988; Kegan, 1982; Levinson, 1988). Levinson (1988) states, "In positing a combined biological, psychological and social basis for this developmental sequence, we are saying that none of these bases is sufficient in itself" (p. 322). Each of these components influences developmental sequences and must be examined in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the individual. Because marital trends are complex and constantly changing (Bjorksten & Stewart, 1984) and have their own developmental sequences, the role of biological, psychological, and social factors need to be evaluated.

Statement of the Problem

This study investigated the marriages of twelve middle-aged and older Jewish couples who had been married for at least twenty years and whose youngest child was eighteen years of age or older. Indepth qualitative interviews were used to assess in what ways couples solve problems and communicate, to identify and evaluate the roles, expectations, and needs which couples strived to fulfill both individually and together. In addition, the study explored the influence of family values and background, and the biological, psychological, and social factors that shaped the marriages, and evaluated the influence of religion and ethnic factors on the relationships. Each spouse was interviewed separately about the influence of these factors on the quality and stability of his/her marriage over three periods. These

periods included the pre-child rearing, child rearing, and post-child rearing years.

Finchman and Bradbury (1987) emphasized the need to measure marital quality from a global standpoint. These researchers posited that the study of relationships is best limited to overall, evaluative judgments. The qualitative method used in this research allowed for the emergence and identification of general themes from the data.

Marital stability refers to whether or not a couple is married (Hicks & Platt, 1970; Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Roberts, 1979). While many studies have assessed marital quality, the couple's subjective experience of their marriage, there are few studies concerning marital stability among couples married for twenty years or longer. The majority of the researchers sampled couples married less than five years (Cole, 1985). The present study allowed for an intensive examination of 12 couples over a period of at least 20 years and enabled the researcher to assess important themes in long term marital relationships.

Developmental transitions and crises through which these couples moved were investigated. Because couples were interviewed about three specific periods in their lives, namely, their first years together, their child rearing years, and their post-child rearing life together, the researcher was able to gain an understanding of the marital relationship over time, to identify significant themes associated with marital stability, and to assess the effect of life transitions and crises on this sample. Although retrospective in nature, this study did not evaluate one point in the relationship, but instead focused

on marriage over three different periods, allowing for the assessment of change and stability in the relationship.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

Strauss and Corbin (1990) state that "the grounded theory approach is a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon" (p. 24). The goal of the research was to present an accurate description of what was being studied and to build a theory of marital stability. The qualitative methods used allowed the researcher to acquire in-depth information from the sample. The use of a semi-structured interview enabled the researcher to cover potentially influential areas, while enabling her to ask follow-up questions in areas which seemed of particular importance to the interviewees. This approach would not have been possible using solely quantitative methods. Through the in-depth interviews, the researcher was able to understand and appreciate the marital experiences of the interviewees, both individually and as a couple. Cole (1985) adds, "the richness of qualitative data has promise of providing a more detailed understanding of the relationship dynamics operating in the marital dyad" (p. 255).

The significance of the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection in qualitative research warrants discussion. The researcher must rely on feelings, impressions, and judgements while collecting the data. The interviewer and the interviewee "interact to influence one another and are inseparably interconnected" (Scharf, 1986, p. 384). Thus, questions asked

during the interview are by definition influenced by the interviewer's choice of theory, values, and methodology, and thereby bias the findings.

There are several limitations in the study. Only twelve Jewish couples were investigated; both the homogeneity and the small sample size limit the ability to generalize to other populations. The amount of time involved in data collection and analysis was extensive. Each spouse was interviewed separately for about two hours. A considerable amount of time was required to transcribe and code the interviews.

The use of self-report data has several inherent problems. Subjects may be prone to social desirability and inaccurate perceptions (Norton, 1983). Spouses were required to recall earlier stages of their marriages and may have distorted the information or purposely left out important variables. Distortion of the data may lead to inaccuracies in the themes which emerge, and thus, to incorrect findings (Belsky, Spanier, & Rovine, 1983; Gray-Little & Burks, 1983). In addition, while the researcher tried to operationally define the questions in the interview, some subjects may have interpreted the questions in unintended ways, thereby offering varied responses based on their interpretations. For example, the concept of decision-making may have several interpretations and meanings. Thus, subjects played a significant role in interpreting the outcomes and themes.

The interpretation of self-report data also has limitations: what is interpreted is subjective. To reduce this problem, each interview was transcribed and data was coded using a scoring system developed by O'Brien and Mackey (1990). This scoring system allowed for the quantification of the

data. The researcher and a male counterpart coded the data independently and then reached consensual agreement on the scoring.

The goal of the research was to yield a thorough analytic description of marriage as experienced and recalled, rather than to test a particular hypothesis or judgement. While there are a variety of subjective and stylistic factors which limit the ability both to replicate the methodology and to generalize from the findings, qualitative methods are appropriately employed in two clear instances: one, when the research goals demand an examination of complex relationships and social processes, both of which are attendant to any definition of marriage; two, when the research goal is to develop hypotheses for intensive research on a particular phenomenon (Warwick & Lininger, 1975; Wax, 1971).

Significance of the Study

In their review of the research on the quality and stability of marriages, Lewis and Spanier (1979) emphasize the importance of evaluating what makes marriages work. Divorce rates continue to rise; Prochaska and Prochaska (1978) report that thirty percent of women who marry at age thirty will go through at least one divorce. They add that the United States has the highest divorce rate in the world. There exists a 50% divorce rate amongst all marriages today (Chadwick & Heaton, 1992). Marital difficulties are one of three leading reasons people seek psychological help (Cowan, Cowan, Heming, Garrett, Coysh, Curtis-Boles, & Boles, 1985; Lewis, 1988a; Prochaska & Prochaska, 1978). In their clinical work, Lederer and Jackson (1968) note that eighty percent of the couples they interviewed thought about divorce at

one time or another. Lewis (1988a) and Segraves (1982) add that marital problems often have damaging effects on both the physical and psychological well-being of the couple. Wamboldt and Reiss (1989) emphasize the importance of looking at what keeps marriages together. Ade-Ridder (1985) states that most studies interview one spouse or treat the sample groups as unrelated men and women and do not assess the relationship. This study provided rich data about the marital relationship over three developmentally different periods.

Much of the literature focuses on marital problems which lead to divorce. Prochaska and Prochaska (1978) state that so much time is spent on resolving problems that the marital relationship often becomes distorted. Schlesinger and Mullaly (1984) emphasize the need to identify factors which keep marriages together and state the importance of studying not only the break-up of Jewish families, but also Jewish marriages which are intact. Statistical data reveal that Jewish couples are less likely to divorce than other major American religious groups (Bumpass and Sweet, 1972; Cherlin and Celebuski, 1983; Cohen, 1981). Perhaps themes specific to the Jewish sample may be useful in understanding marriage across cultures.

Developmental psychologists discuss the importance of identifying processes related to normal psychological and cognitive development to provide an understanding of pathology (Cicchetti, 1989). Continuities and discontinuities across the life span are emphasized and the effects of experience on modifying or maintaining behavior are assessed. This approach allows for a more proactive, preventative therapeutic stance. If themes relating to marital stability can be identified, an appropriate focus can

be incorporated into therapeutic and preventative modalities to assist couples in maintaining stable marriages. These findings have implications for clinicians in their work with distressed couples as clinicians may be able to identify significant factors causing difficulty and to assist couples in making the changes necessary to maintain marital stability.

Support for studies of specific marital stages has been repeatedly identified in the literature (Nichols, 1978; Zube, 1982). Moore (1980) emphasizes the lack of research on the effect of the interaction between parents and children on the marital relationship. Nichols (1978) adds, "any attempt to improve the parental skills of men and women in our society without giving serious attention to the marital relationship in particular is...a truncated and incomplete approach" (p. 185). Limited research exists on the later years of marriage as well (Moore, 1980). With increased life expectancy, couples are married for an increased number of years late in life and have qualitatively different issues to address (Steinmetz & Amsden, 1983).

Lastly, this study identified patterns of stability and change by asking marriage partners how they managed significant life crises. Information was gathered on the effect of the crisis on the marital relationship. By examining the ways couples managed their crises, one can gain a sense of the key factors that are helpful in returning to and maintaining stability. Knowledge of these factors and their relative effects may assist and prepare other couples to address them as they arise.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Marital Stability and Quality

The literature documents a strong correlation between marital quality and marital stability (Kelly & Conley, 1987; Lewis & Spanier, 1979), and both measures of marital adjustment are considered in this review. Marital quality is associated with good judgement, communication, happiness, integration, and high satisfaction with the relationship (Hicks & Platt, 1970; Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Roberts, 1979). While these measures of quality are examined more frequently in the literature, marital stability is measured more easily (Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Roberts, 1979). Hicks and Platt (1970) and Lewis and Spanier (1979) state that married couples aspire to high levels of both quality and stability and that while most couples achieve this state during their marriage, albeit usually in the early years of marriage, only a few couples maintain it throughout their marriage.

Some of the research suggests that stability is not as dependent on quality or happiness as has been assumed; that is, long-term marriages may not necessarily be stable because they are satisfying (Cuber & Harroff, 1963, 1965; Hicks & Platt, 1970). In their study of upper middle class couples married at least 10 years and who had never considered divorce or separation, Cuber and Harroff (1963) found a number of couples who remained together despite their dissatisfaction with the relationship. Similarly, couples who are happy in their marriages have been known to divorce (Lewis & Spanier, 1979).

Levinger (1965) discusses "bars" and "bonds" to stability, both of which work to keep the marriage stable. "Bars" refer to social and psychological constraints against the break-up of a marriage (Nye, White, & Friederes, 1969), a concept Lewis and Spanier (1979) term "extradyadic factors." The latter relate high marital stability with external influences and social and psychological forces working against separation; examples include obligations to the children and/or marital commitment, religious beliefs, the stigma associated with divorce or separation, high threshold for marital difficulties and tension, and financial and legal issues. Lederer and Jackson's research (1968) supports the finding that economics and children keep dissatisfied couples intact. Spouses cannot afford to live separately due to financial hardships. In addition, they fear that separation may cause added emotional strain on the children. Nye et al. (1969) add that poor alternatives, including being single or remarrying, may be a factor in keeping a couple together. "Bonds" or attractions in a stable marriage include esteem for the spouse, the desire for companionship, sexual enjoyment, income, home ownership, husband's education and occupation and the couple's similarity of religion, education, and age (Hicks & Platt, 1970; Levinger, 1965; Lewis & Spanier, 1979).

A number of specific themes related to marital quality have been identified in the literature. Hicks and Platt (1970) and Lewis and Spanier (1979) found marital happiness to be related to higher occupational status, income, educational level of the husband, affectional rewards like esteem for spouse, sexual enjoyment, companionship and age at marriage, e.g., the older the couple when first married, the more satisfied they were. Greater

emotional and physical health, positive self-concept, and ability to relate interpersonally were correlated positively with high marital quality.

In their study of 100 upper-middle class couples, Lauer, Lauer, and Kerr (1990) identified a number of important reasons for marital success including friendship and involvement in an intimate relationship with someone whose company they enjoyed. In addition, they discussed the couple's level of agreement as it related to satisfaction. They found that satisfied couples had general agreement on themes of finance, leisure activities, religion, display of affection, friendships, philosophy of life, time spent together and with extended family, sexual relationship, career decisions, and day-to-day tasks. Marital quality was thus related to couple's agreement on several important factors including relationship, sociocultural, and external variables. The more agreement between spouses, the more successful the marriage. This study lends strong support for the positive relationship between marital quality and stability.

In their comparison of behavioral vs. communication therapy with 30 distressed couples, 25 to 61 years old, O'Leary and Turkewitz (1981) found a high correlation between love and positive feelings and marital satisfaction. Other studies cite love as the most important affective component in a successful marriage (Broderick, 1981; Broderick & O'Leary, 1986). Bentler and Newcomb (1978) provide longitudinal support for a positive relationship between homogamy factors and personality traits in a comparison of 53 couples who were married for four years with 24 divorced or separated couples. Subjects were either Protestant or reported no religious affiliation. Couples in each sample had great disparity in socioeconomic status. Bentler

and Newcomb (1978) concluded that married couples were similar in their types and degrees of general activity, restraint, friendliness, and personal relations. In contrast, the non-married couples evidenced no significant similarity for these traits. In their comparison of 102 stable and 37 unstable (separated or in therapy) couples, Cattell and Nesselroade (1967) found stability to be related to similarities within the couple in intelligence, enthusiasm, imagination, and conscience. Each of these studies emphasized the positive relationship between marital stability and similarity in personality traits and illustrated the influential role of homogamy factors in the prediction of marital stability.

Researchers have identified a number of additional themes related to marital quality and stability (Demment, 1991; Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Roberts, 1979; Spanier, 1976; Zube, 1982). Demment (1991) found 12 major themes in her interviews of middle class couples married a minimum of 20 years. These themes included expectations about the marriage, mutuality, insight-oriented understanding and similarity of values. Lewis and Spanier's (1979) review supports these findings. Roberts (1979) identified significant themes in 50 couples married an average of 56 years. The majority of the couples had an annual income of $5,000 to $10,000. Themes included independence, commitment, caring, and companionship. In their investigation of 300 Caucasian couples who were engaged to be married, Kelly and Conley (1987) found a strong positive correlation between marital instability and three personality traits. These traits included the impulse control of the husband, and the neuroticism of both the husband and the wife. The more impulsive and/or neurotic, the more likelihood of marital instability. Other important

factors contributing to marital happiness included the emotional stability, adaptability and flexibility of the individuals (Hicks & Platt, 1970). Lauer, et al. (1990) emphasized the importance of an extended dating period which allows the couple to get to know one another, and increase the likelihood of a successful and stable marriage over time.

Lewis and Spanier (1979) offer three propositions regarding marital quality. First, they state that the greater the social and personal resources available for adequate marital role functioning, the higher the marital quality. Examples of this include the degree of exposure individuals have had to adequate role models, the amount of support they receive as a couple from peers, and the degree of premarital homogamy mentioned earlier. Second, Lewis and Spanier (1979) positively relate the degree of satisfaction with the individual's lifestyle with his or her level of marital quality. The more involvement in the community and the higher the socioeconomic status, the more satisfied the couple. Third, the researchers propose that higher marital quality is related to positive feedback from the interaction between spouses which includes levels of emotional gratification, communication, interaction, and positive regard. In their study of 83 rural and 98 urban predominantly white, lower and middle-class couples, Barnes, Schumm, Jurich, and Bollman (1984) identified a positive relationship between marital quality and regard, empathy, and congruence, with regard accounting for a plurality of the variance. One of the key objectives of this research was to identify, in an empirical setting, principal factors which contribute to marital quality at various points in the marital relationship.

Commitment

Moore (1980) reported a negative relationship between couples experiencing marital difficulties and their level of commitment, with commitment defined as getting married and staying married due to the personal characteristics of the spouse. Committed couples had fewer problems and agreed more on what their problems were than did the less committed couples. Broderick and O'Leary (1986) found commitment to be a significant predictor of marital satisfaction for women only. Nonetheless, differential levels of commitment at different stages may be a key determinant of marital stability for both sexes.

Communication

The issue of communication and its relationship to marital quality and stability has received much attention in the literature (Barnes, et al., 1984; Finchman & Bradbury, 1987; Hicks & Platt, 1970; Lauer, et al, 1990; Markman, 1981; Moore, 1980; Navran, 1967). In a longitudinal study of nine couples, Markman (1981) found a positive correlation between communication and marital satisfaction, that is, the better the communication, the more satisfied the couple. Negative communication patterns have been related to and possibly precede marital unhappiness (Billings, 1979; Filsinger & Thoma, 1988; Markman, 1979). Moore researched 224 couples, two-thirds of whom had less than a college education and one-third of whom had completed college. Each couple was married a minimum of 20 years. Moore (1980) found that problems in communication and expression of affection were the most common complaints for this sample. These findings support Gottman

and Krokoff's (1989) conclusion that negative interaction is more common in the interaction of unhappily married couples than in happily married couples.

Several studies have compared unhappily married with happily married couples (Birchler & Webb, 1977; Gurin, Veroff, & Feld, 1960). The source of happiness for happily married couples was the relationship, while unhappily married couples focused less on the relationship and the interaction with their spouses. Birchler and Webb's (1977) compared 50 happy couples who were university employees with 50 unhappy couples who had sought help at a mental health clinic. They concluded that happy couples had fewer problems, spent more time together, and engaged in sexual behavior more often than did unhappy couples.

Both satisfied and dissatisfied couples have disagreements and arguments. Gottman and Krokoff (1989) state that it is not the disagreements or exchanges of anger themselves, but it is how the conflicts get resolved; patterns of negotiation directly influence one's feelings about one's marriage. Display of emotion can be indicative of satisfaction over time. Gottman and Krokoff (1989) state that "confrontation of disagreement by itself is functional for marriage in a longitudinal sense" (p. 50). Couples in conflict who work toward compromise are less likely to divorce than are couples who get defensive and avoid trying to understand or tolerate the other spouse's ideas and feelings (Barry, 1970; Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Osmond & Martin, 1978). Alternatively, couples who avoid conflict to "keep the peace" in the short term, often have larger, unresolved problems in the long term. Angry exchanges and display of affect can be representative of marital dissatisfaction

especially when the individuals in the marriage are defensive, stubborn, and refuse to listen to each other. One study comparing 12 distressed couples with 12 nondistressed couples all of whom were recruited through the media, concluded that distressed couples made more negative and fewer positive statements toward each other (Billings, 1979).

Power

Power in the marital relationship, defined as one spouse having the ability to control the other, has also been identified as related to marital happiness (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Centers, Raven, & Rodrigues, 1971; Gray-Little & Burks, 1983; Lauer, et al., 1990). These researchers all define "power" in terms of control and manipulation. Blood and Wolfe (1960) and Gray-Little and Burks (1983) found higher levels of marital satisfaction among egalitarian couples, where neither spouse had consistently more power. Similarly, Burgess and Locke (1945) found that a "companionship marriage" based on mutual respect and understanding was positively correlated with couples who were stable and satisfied in their marriages. Blood and Wolfe (1960) surveyed 900 lower, middle, and upper class Detroit wives and found that couples in which the wives were perceived to be dominant were most likely to be unhappy in their marriages. Conversely, couples in which the husband was perceived to be dominant were happy. These findings however, must be considered in terms of the extant social constructs and expectations of marriage in the late 1950s. In a study conducted 20 years later, Kelley (1979) hypothesized that stable marriages are constantly moving toward a balance of power. What is important in this balance is not the actual equity of power,

but the perception of equality (Lauer, et al., 1990); as long as each spouse believes that the power is shared, the marriage will be stable.

Gray-Little and Burks (1983) caution researchers who employ the term "decision making" to operationally define "marital power". They state that the spouse identified as the decision-maker may have been directed or manipulated into that role by the other spouse. The spouse who is the decision-maker may not necessarily be the more powerful person in the marriage. Thus, specific information about the way the term "decision-making" is used is essential to understanding the power dynamics in the relationship.

<u>Gender Differences</u>

Gender differences are clearly a factor in understanding marital relationships. Roles men and women play both interpersonally and in society are constantly changing, especially as social and personal expectations about marriage evolve over time (Demment, 1991). Some theorists believe that marital problems result from women struggling for equality, and that women influence marital stability more than men (Bentler & Newcomb, 1978; Prochaska & Prochaska, 1978). A reason for this finding may be that women are viewed as more interpersonally oriented than men, and are thus more responsible for the marriage and its outcome. Lewis (1988b) sees women as "relationship specialists" who are responsible for communication in the marriage. He believes women are more likely to take the initiative in problem-solving, whereas men are more likely to avoid conflict, which leads to dissatisfaction in the long term. Gottman and Krokoff (1989) support this

finding. They studied 25 couples married an average of 24 years and who varied greatly in marital satisfaction. In addition, they sampled 30 couples who were married an average of four years and varied widely in marital satisfaction. These researchers concluded that women who are compliant in their marriages in relation to their husbands' negative affect at home were satisfied with their marriage in the short term, but experienced significant problems over time.

Several studies have surveyed gender differences in communication patterns when marital problems arise (Argyle & Henderson, 1985; Hagestad, 1984; Kotler & Omodei, 1988). Most of the literature suggests that when men speak about their problems, they do so with their wives. Women, alternatively, maintain closer ties with their relatives and friends, and confide in them more often; they are more likely to seek emotional support from others than are their husbands (Argyle & Henderson, 1985).

Themes in Jewish Marriages

Most of the literature on marital quality and stability has focused on white Protestant couples (Hicks & Platt, 1970). This review found limited research on the themes which keep Jewish couples together. Schlesinger and Mullaly (1984) studied the marital stability of 129 middle and upper middle class couples, 40 of whom were Jewish, who were married a minimum of 15 years and had between one and five children. The couples in this sample ranged in age from 33 to 67. Significant themes contributing to marital stability were identified by each spouse: trust and love for each other, honest communication, friendship, give and take in marriage, ability to problem-

solve together, fidelity, and willingness to make sacrifices. Jewish women emphasized the importance of having friends independent of the marital relationship and were more likely to confront problems while husbands emphasized sharing common activities. These findings generally supported the gender differences in non-Jewish couples cited above.

In their comparison of 40 Jewish and 89 non-Jewish couples, all 33 to 67 years old, Schlesinger and Mullaly (1984) found that Jewish couples rated a number of themes as more important to marital stability than did non-Jewish couples. These themes included sharing negative feelings and emotions, recognizing the needs of the individual within the marriage, similar ethnic and religious background, common interests and activities, freedom from financial worries, confiding innermost feelings to each other, loving each other, and sexual satisfaction. Jewish couples emphasized issues related to intimacy and homogeneity more than non-Jewish couples.

In a random survey of 4,505 Jewish households in metropolitan New York, Brodbar-Nemzer (1986a) found a negative correlation between group commitment to Judaism and divorce. Those with greater group commitment on a number of variables were less likely to divorce. Religion as the basis for the group commitment had the largest effect on the divorce rate, and the percentage of Jewish couples who divorce decreased as one moved from Reform Judaism to Conservatism to Orthodoxy. Ethnicity was a significant factor even among those who did not consider themselves religious. The study concludes: "the overall pattern indicates that associational Judaism does make a difference in divorce, even when the level of religious observance and affiliation are low" (p. 333).

Developmental Theory

Marital quality is a dynamic concept which can be studied from a developmental perspective. The quality and stability of a relationship varies throughout the life span; consequently, an assessment of several different periods of the relationship enabled the researcher to study shifts in behaviors and patterns of interaction (Lewis & Spanier, 1979). Developmental psychologists are specifically concerned with identifying and understanding the conditions regulating stability and change (Cowan, 1988). Cowan (1988) states that development "always involves a degree of modification between successive measurement periods and responsiveness to alterations in situation or context. Too much change, however, is usually taken as a sign that something is wrong" (p. 8-9). Stability, the other central defining attribute of normal development, refers to predictability and consistency across situations (Cowan, 1988).

Kegan's (1982) developmental theory discusses the individual's evolving through a series of different subject/object balances over the course of a lifespan. These balances are, by definition, dynamic and constantly "imbalanced"; individuals have yearnings for communion and agency, a term Kegan borrows from Bakan (1966). In his conception of the way spouses contribute to each other's growth, Bakan (1966) states that "the ideal marriage...is...one which, through the integration of agency and communion, takes place within each of the partners" (p. 153). Kegan (1982) discusses this principal as an ongoing tension existing between inclusion and independence which pulls the individual back and forth between different balances.

Lewis (1988a) studied 38 Caucasian, Protestant couples, who were married an average of four years. The couples' incomes ranged from $10,000 to over $50,000, with a mean of $37,000. In this study, Lewis (1988a) discussed developmental transitions in terms of stability and change, noting the importance of both of these processes. He states that stability of structure across transitions can be maladaptive, i.e. one can have difficulty adapting to change. Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend (1974) stated that major life changes caused stress for individuals and they had trouble adapting.

In his research on developmental changes in couples, Levinson (1988) suggests that one can anticipate changes in an individual's life cycle within specific dimensions of the marital relationship. These dimensions include intimacy, power, boundaries, and commitment. In their research on 31 white collar couples, White, Speisman, Jackson, Bartis, and Costos (1986) similarly found that intimate relationships as well as the individuals in them, follow specific developmental processes. They examined five dimensions of intimacy: the relationship orientation, caring-concern, commitment, sexuality, and communication.

Cowan, Cowan, Heming, Garrett, Coysh, Curtis-Boles, and Boles III (1985) studied 96 couples, 72 of whom were expecting their first child. The remaining 24 couples were not yet decided about having children. The sample reflected a range of racial backgrounds: 85% were Caucasian, and 15% were Asian, Black, or Hispanic. The researchers examined the role of differentiation in developmental theory and its impact on both the individual and the system. They cite differentiation as a positive factor in the individual's growth. However, they state that couples experience increasing

conflict when they face differences between them. Conflict then leads to a lessened overall satisfaction within the marriage. For example, Cowan et al. (1985) cite the importance of comparing couples who work together in facing the challenges of parenting with couples experiencing more difficulty with this task.

Further support for a developmental focus comes from Kotler and Omodei's (1988) data which supports continuities over time between the parental and the present family. They reported that initial marital quality influences subsequent changes in the relationship through developmental changes in the partners. The psychological make-up of each partner is related to the quality of relationships they have experienced in the past; the spouse's relationship with his or her family of origin and significant others, as well as the level of family stress, contributed significantly to the psychological health of the individual prior to the marriage. Wamboldt and Reiss (1989) studied 16 pre-marital couples; 24 of the individuals in this sample were Caucasian and eight were non-white. Fourteen individuals were Protestant, seven were Catholic, five were Jewish, and six identified no religious preference. The mean education for the males and females in this study were 15.1 and 16.2 years, respectively. The researchers found a significant relationship between the couple's marital satisfaction and the environment in which the individuals were reared. Bowen (1974) and Nichols (1978) theorize that the type and degree of emotional attachment between spouses is similar to the emotional attachment each experienced in his or her family of origin. Each person brings to the marriage their own set of feelings and relationship models that they have learned from their family of origin (Nichols, 1978).

This includes their conception and understanding of their parent's marriage as well as their perceptions about their parent's sexual relationship. Each of these factors influences the couple's marriage.

Several cross-sectional studies have surveyed couples at different stages of family life (Gurin, et al., 1960; Hicks & Platt, 1970; Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Moore, 1980; Orden & Bradburn, 1969; Spanier, Lewis, & Cole, 1975). Most of this literature suggests that marital satisfaction declines over the first 15 years of marriage, a pattern paralleling the parenting years, then increases again after the children leave home. Thus, there is support for a curvilinear relationship between the family life cycle and marital adjustment. Other studies support a general decline in satisfaction over time. Blood and Wolfe (1960) found that satisfaction declines for wives, while Pineo (1961) observed dissatisfaction occurring earlier in the marriage for husbands than for wives. There was a decline in companionship, display of affection, consensual decision-making, mutual interests, belief in the permanence of the marriage, and overall marital satisfaction. Rollins and Feldman (1970) found that companionship experiences decrease from the beginning of the marriage to the early parenting years in their study of 799 middle-class couples.

Few studies have focused on all three phases of marriage: the beginning years of marriage, the child rearing years, and the post-child rearing years. Instead, research has focused predominantly on one phase of marriage. For example, both Hollingshead (1950) and Nichols (1978) have examined the premarital and beginning years of marriage. They discussed mate selection and initial attraction, and identified similarity of race, religion, and education as important factors when choosing a partner. Nichols (1978) and Nadelson,

Polonsky, and Mathews (1984) found that partners are idealized in the initial stage. This initial stage is characterized by distortion and unrealistic perceptions of the spouse. This idealization begins to break down as the partners get to know one another, and settle into their married lives together.

The transition to parenthood is a developmental challenge for the couple (Lewis, 1988b). They must adapt both to changes in roles, and to changes in their interpersonal relationship. The decline in marital quality when children are born is associated with a decrease in romance and an increase in instrumental, partnership aspects. However, one study found decline in marital quality to be relatively stable across couples, i.e. those who scored high in prenatal marital quality scored relatively high after the birth of the child (Belsky, Spanier, and Rovine, 1983). Lewis (1988b) notes several significant factors in the transition to parenthood, namely, the parent's coping skills, their perceived stress, and perceived support from friends and family.

Some studies rate the childbearing years as a period when marital satisfaction is high (Rollins & Feldman, 1970) while others identify the curvilinear relationship discussed earlier (Spanier, et al., 1975). Cowan, et al. (1985) studied new parents and the stresses and changes they experience as compared with non-parents. They cited more negative changes in couples with first children than in couples with no children; they also found an increase in spousal differentiation as couples became parents. In this same study, couples with children took on more gender-specific roles: men became more work focused and experienced themselves as good providers, while women became more focused on domestic responsibilities. Women reported

that their husbands pulled away from the family when they were needed more. These shifts in roles were associated with declines in role satisfaction for both individuals, with more prevalent decline experienced by men.

Moore (1980) hypothesized that the more parents interacted with their children, the less affective expression there was between the spouses and the more child rearing problems. Lewis (1988b) cited a positive correlation between resolution of family of origin problems and successful incorporation of children into the family. Similarly, Quinton, Rutter, and Liddle (1984) found that women who had significant problems in their family of origin, were more likely to experience problems with parenting in adult life than was a comparison group. One would expect that a balance between child/parent interaction and interaction within the couple would be desired and optimal.

The average couple marrying today and living out their expected life span, will be married 48 years (Moore, 1980). About half of this time will be experienced in the post-child rearing stage. Despite this observation, little research exists on the relationship of couples who are beyond their child rearing years. Swensen, Eskew, and Kohlhepp (1977) called this stage the "aging family"; it begins when the youngest child leaves home and ends with the death of one of the spouses. Retirement is sometimes used as a measure to define this stage. The nature of the marital relationship plays a significant part in the experience of retirement for both spouses (Moore, 1980). Others have identified the post-child rearing years as having specific developmental tasks: the 50s are generally the age of the postparental years, the 60s are a time when the couple anticipates and deals with retirement, and the 70s often bring separation of the couple through death (Bumagin & Hirn, 1982).

As noted above, some studies indicate that marital problems decline when the children leave home (Spanier, et al., 1975). While Swensen, et al. (1977) conclude that significant marital problems continue for most couples throughout their marriage, there appear to be some factors specific to the post-child rearing stage which would influence the quality and stability of marriage. Two reviews of the literature on married couples stated that older women became more assertive while older men exhibit an increase in dependency and affiliative needs (Bumagin & Hirn, 1982; Zube, 1982). Patterns of sexual interest and activity stabilize during the middle years of marriage and remain constant into old age (Pfeiffer & Davis, 1972). One study of 50 couples concluded that more than 50% of older married couples report a sexually active relationship (Roberts, 1979). One key goal of this research was to identify and differentiate those factors which are particular to the post-child rearing stage of marriage, and to begin to assess their degree of influence on marital quality and stability.

Clearly, there are different developmental tasks for individuals and couples at different stages of their lives and relationships. Lewis (1988a) has asked, "Which types of marital structure undergoing specific developmental transitions are most apt to manifest crisis?" (p. 281) One task of this research was to further identify transitions, and to understand by what mechanisms couples deal with these themes in the Jewish sample. In addition, it assessed the developmental shifts through which couples transitioned and the effects of these shifts on the emerging themes.

There are several principal themes in the current research which are related to marital stability. They include marital quality, communication,

commitment, power, gender differences in roles and behaviors, and cultural aspects. Each of these themes has been examined during one phase of marriage, most often the beginning years. Few studies have focused on these themes as they relate to long-married couples. Nor have studies identified marital changes over time. The present study examined each of these factors.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

The first chapter provided an overview and rationale for the study. It discussed the lack of research regarding factors important in the stability of long-married Jewish couples and provided a context for and outline of the research. Chapter Two documented the literature in related areas: themes associated with marital quality for couples married a relatively short amount of time, factors specific to Jewish couples, and an overview of the research on adult development and how it may impact couples. The present chapter describes the operational elements of the research: the qualitative methods employed, the study participants, the procedures for recruiting participants, data collection processes, methods of data analysis employed, and a statement of subjectivity.

Choice of Qualitative Research Methodology

The research methodology described by Strauss and Corbin (1990) was used in this study. This approach uses "a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 24). Strauss and Corbin (1990) define "grounded theory" as a scientific method involving significance, theory-observation compatibility, generalizability, reproducibility, precision, rigor, and verification.

The goal of qualitative research is to generate hypotheses about individuals and phenomena being studied, to build a theory grounded in the data by identifying important themes, and to allow the design to emerge as the study progresses (Scharf, 1986). It provides a scientific way for new phenomena to be investigated. Diesing (1971) and Glaser (1978) state that the development of theoretically informed interpretations is a powerful way to identify important meanings and underlying themes.

As noted, prior research on marital quality and stability has not focused on the experiences of long-married couples and the themes which promote marital stability. Lewis and Spanier (1979) state that a "qualitative evaluation of the marital relationship...is logically the most salient focus for theory building" (p. 273). Cole (1985) adds that "the richness of qualitative data has promise of providing a more detailed understanding of the relationship dynamics operating in the marital dyad" (p. 255). This study used qualitative methods to present an accurate description of the 12 couples interviewed and to identify themes related to marital stability.

Hicks and Platt (1970) emphasized the importance of discarding "value-laden concepts" when using self-report data; that is, to avoid responses which are influenced by society's expectations concerning marital happiness. Therefore, this study focused on how long-married couples negotiated their needs, how problems were addressed and resolved, how the relationship developed and changed, and which factors emerged as important in keeping the relationship intact.

Scharf (1986) notes that when studying a particular culture, it is important to identify the values, feelings, and beliefs specific to that culture.

The accuracy of the particular identification can be evaluated only through intensive, interactive study of that culture. The couples in this study were asked to identify and discuss in detail the importance of Jewish values in their marriages from both a religious and cultural perspective.

Research Design and Procedures

Participants.

The sample for this study was composed of 12 non-Orthodox Jewish couples who were married for a minimum of 20 years and whose youngest child was 18 years of age or older. All males in the study possessed a college degree. There was no requirement that the females in the study had to attend college; however, neither spouse could have an advanced degree.

The age, years married, number of children, and income levels of the subjects are presented in Table One. The subjects ranged in age from 44 to 77. The mean age of the females was 60, while males averaged 63 years. Spouses were close in age as they had only between one and five years separating them. All of the husbands were older than their wives. The number of years married ranged between 23 and 50, with a mean of 38 years. Each couple had from two to four children, with a mean of 2.6. The median joint income for the sample was $100,000, with a range of $60,000 to $125,000. All but one of the couples belonged to a temple while they were rearing their children. Five couples were members of Conservative temples, five couples were members of Reformed temples, and one couple had raised their children in an Orthodox temple, but did not consider themselves Orthodox.

While all men in the study had college educations, the women varied

Table 1

Age, Years Married, Offspring, Joint Income, and Temple Affiliation

Couple	Age	Yrs. Marr	# of Child	Joint Income	Temple Affiliation
*Arthur	59	33	3	$100K	Conservative
Alison	56				
Brian	67	43	2	$90K	None
Bernice	66				
Carl	73	44	3	$100K	Reform
Cara	69				
David	66	40	3	$60K	Conservative
Debora	62				
Earl	77	50	2	>$100K	Reform
Emily	74				
Fred	70	44	2	>$100K	Reform
Fannie	68				
Greg	69	47	4	$125K	Reform
Gladys	68				
Henry	52	26	2	$100K	Conservative
Hilary	48				
Ian	56	29	2	$80K	Conservative
Ina	51				
James	57	32	2	$125K	**Orthodox
Julia	53				
Kent	45	23	2	$95K	Reform
Kim	44				
Len	64	41	4	$75K	Conservative
Lillian	61				

	X= 61	X=38	X=2.6	X=$97K	
	Range=44-77			Median=$100K	
				Range=$60K->125K	

* All names are pseudonyms.

** This couple reared their children in an Orthodox temple, but did not consider themselves Orthodox.

in educational background (see Table Two). Six of the women had high school backgrounds; the remaining six women had college degrees. All but three of the individuals were originally from Massachusetts. At the time of the interviews, all of the couples resided in the northeast part of the country. Seven of the men owned their own businesses at one time in their marriage, while four had upper level management positions. One man was in the field of transportation.

At the time of the interviews, five of the men were retired. Six of the women in the sample were homemakers and had not worked outside of the home at any time during their married lives; three of these women pursued volunteer work with various Jewish organizations. Of those women who worked, two were office managers, one was a bookkeeper, one was a fashion editor, one was a pre-school teacher, and one was currently at home, but had worked as a researcher in several hospitals.

Recruitment of subjects.

The researcher adopted several strategies to recruit couples for the study. She began by developing a list of referral sources which might lead her to couples meeting the criteria for the study. All potential referral sources were sent a letter asking if they knew of couples who met the criteria for the study and who might be willing to participate in it (see Appendix A). The letter stated that the researcher was currently a doctoral candidate and that she was researching how couples married for 20 years or more think and feel about their marriage. It explained that the goal of the study was to identify themes which have contributed to the couples' remaining together.

The criteria for participation in the study and the interview process

Table 2

Education Level, Geographic Origin, and Field of Employment

Couple	Education Level	Geographic Origin	Field of Employment
*Arthur	college	MA	businessperson**
Alison	college	GA	homemaker
Brian	college	MA	businessperson**
Bernice	high school	MA	homemaker
Carl	college	MA	businessperson**
Cara	college	MA	fashion editor
David	college	MA	businessperson**
Debora	college	NY	homemaker
Earl	college	MA	businessperson**
Emily	college	MA	homemaker
Fred	college	MA	businessperson**
Fannie	high school	MA	homemaker
Greg	college	NH	businessperson**
Gladys	high school	MA	homemaker
Henry	college	MA	businessperson
Hilary	high school	MA	bookkeeper
Ian	college	MA	businessperson
Ina	college	MA	pre-school teacher
James	college	MA	transportation
Julia	high school	MA	office manager
Kent	college	MA	businessperson
Kim	college	MA	office manager
Len	college	MA	businessperson**
Lillian	high school	MA	homemaker

*All names are pseudonyms.

**Self employed

(including voluntary participation, time commitment, and confidentiality) were clearly described in the correspondence. Throughout the course of the recruitment phase of the study, the researcher mailed 22 letters to potential referral sources. Each of these sources was contacted by telephone one week later to ascertain whether or not he or she could provide leads to potential subjects. In four cases, the referral source provided the researcher with names of other people who might refer her to potential couples. These people included two Rabbis and two Executive Directors from temples in the MetroBoston area. The majority of the referral sources had given some thought to potential subjects and gave the researcher their names, addresses, and telephone numbers. Neither the Rabbis nor the Executive Directors provided the researcher with names of potential subjects when contacted.

The researcher sent each potential couple an introductory letter about the study which included information about the researcher, the purpose of the study, why the researcher was writing to them specifically, and the criteria for participation in the study. It also included information about the length of the interview, the use of the data, and confidentiality (see Appendix B). An informed consent form was enclosed with each of the letters to the couples (see Appendix C). The consent form included the goals of the study, audiotaping of the interview, the individual's right to stop the interview at any time or not to respond to questions he or she did not feel comfortable addressing, confidentiality, and a description of how the data would be used. The recruitment of other couples occurred concurrently with the interview process. Letters to 23 potential subjects were mailed over a six month period. Each letter was followed by a telephone call one week later to ascertain the

couple's interest in participation in the study. Of the 23 couples who were sent letters, 11 declined participation. Four of these 11 indicated that they were too busy, three said that their husbands were reluctant to participate, three others gave no reason for declining, and in one case, the female had an advanced degree and thus did not meet a criterion for participation.

When a couple indicated an interest in participating in the study, two interview dates were scheduled, one with each individual. Each of these couples was sent a confirmation letter thanking them for their willingness to participate in the study and confirming the interview dates. The researcher called each participant the night before the scheduled interview to reconfirm and to get directions to their homes.

The Interview.

Prior to interviewing subjects, the researcher pre-tested the interview on a woman meeting the criteria for the study. This enabled the researcher to identify any difficulties with the interview, to evaluate the length of time needed for the interview, and to practice her interviewing skills. It also allowed the researcher to establish clearer operational definitions of the constructs used in the study, thus generating clearer themes from the data (Norton, 1983).

All of the interviews took place between June, 1992 and January, 1993. One interview took place at the individual's place of business. All of the other interviews occurred at the couples' homes. The in-home interviews allowed the researcher to gain further information about the couples' lifestyles.

The researcher interviewed each spouse separately, a method Gray-Little and Burks (1983) suggest when collecting self-report data. Each interview was recorded using a small audio tape recorder. The interviews lasted between one and two and a half hours with the average interview lasting about one and one half hours. At the beginning of the interview, each individual read and signed the informed consent form described above. The researcher clarified any remaining questions and encouraged the interviewees to share any thoughts or concerns they had about the interview or the study.

The researcher was keenly aware of the importance of establishing a safe, trusting relationship and building rapport with each of the interviewees. Norton (1983) states that this type of relationship is more likely to produce meaningful self-report data. Consequently, the researcher spent the beginning of each interview establishing an environment where the interviewees felt comfortable sharing the details of their marital experiences.

The researcher used a semi-structured interview designed by O'Brien and Mackey (1990) of Boston College (see Appendix D). A brief description of this interview was given to each interviewee. The description included: the individual's marriage as it was during the pre-child rearing, child rearing years, and post-child rearing years; the individual's assessment of how the marriage changed and/or stayed the same in terms of roles, expectations, and needs over the three phases; the influence of family background and values on the marriage; the influence of the individual's parent's marriage in terms of roles, expectations and relationships; and the individual's overall assessment of the important factors in the marriage over time. Additional

questions pertaining to the developmental aspect of the study and to the influence of biological, psychological and social factors on the marriage were incorporated into the interview format. Demographic data about the interviewee were obtained and recorded on a face sheet before the researcher turned on the tape recorder.

The researcher's advanced clinical training and experience coupled with the semi-structured interview format allowed the researcher to ask probing questions, to facilitate open responses, and to offer supportive comments to the interviewees. The researcher maintained an open-ended style throughout each interview to encourage and elicit elaborated responses from the interviewees. Interviewees were also asked to comment about the interview process and the study as a whole.

The majority of the interviews proceeded smoothly and without interruption. In two cases, the interviewees asked for a short break when the tape needed to be turned over. In two other instances, the spouse came in briefly to speak with the other spouse concerning matters unrelated to the study. During one interview, it became apparent that the couple was having tremendous difficulty communicating in their marriage since the husband's retirement. When the researcher raised the possibility of seeking counseling, the interviewee disclosed that she had recently begun seeing a psychologist to work on this problem.

Following each interview, the researcher tape recorded her own reactions. Her comments included the length of interview, the level of rapport established, her subjective feelings about the interview, significant

factors that arose during the interview, and other data she felt was pertinent to the research project.

After interviewing both individuals in the couple, the researcher handwrote a note to the couple thanking them for their participation, and telling them that she would forward them a synopsis of her findings when the study was completed.

Files.

The large amount of information gathered in a qualitative study requires sound organization. Consequently, the researcher maintained a number of files which included:

1. Mundane Files. This file was used to store all blank and completed forms used in the study: informed consent forms, introductory letters to referral sources and potential subjects, face sheets, coding sheets, and the semi-structured interview.

2. Interview Reactions File. All of the researcher's reactions to the interviews were transcribed and stored in this file.

3. The Interviews. Each of the interviews was transcribed, assigned a code, and kept in this file.

4. Discussion File. This file included any thoughts the researcher had throughout the study including the implications of the study, any hunches or assumptions made (e.g. nascent hypotheses), and areas for further exploration.

Analysis of the Data

Each of the 24 taped interviews was transcribed; 12 were transcribed by the researcher and 12 by a professional transcriber who was informed about issues of confidentiality prior to being hired. After each interview was transcribed, the researcher read the hard copy of the interview while listening to the tape to correct any mistakes and to facilitate accurate coding.

Each interview was coded for themes using a scoring system developed by O'Brien and Mackey (1990). Additional scoring measures were added to the system to rate the effects of transitional and crisis periods, and biological, psychological, and social factors on the marriage (see Appendix E). To improve the reliability of the findings, the researcher and a male counterpart independently coded the data and then convened to discuss themes emerging from the data. Areas of disagreement were discussed and consensus was reached regarding the scoring in all cases. During the scoring of the first eight interviews, a doctoral level research assistant was present to contribute his thoughts about the scoring and the data. Interrater reliability statistics were calculated and are presented in Chapter Four.

After all of the interviews were scored and agreement was reached, the scoring was analyzed using SPSS software. Frequencies were calculated, and Chi-squares were performed to identify significant changes in the couples' marital experiences over the three phases.

Concurrently, themes were categorized using the HyperRESEARCH software (1991). This research tool enabled the researcher to catalogue and organize specific passages from the interviews upon which the emerging themes are based. Data were then organized and analyzed by theme or by

individual case. HyperRESEARCH enabled the researcher to more easily access and organize a significant amount of relevant data.

Statement of Subjectivity

Given the nature and type of research, the researcher needed to be aware of her own biases during the data collection and analysis phases of the study. These biases included expectations and assumptions made about the sample and the findings, as well as the influence of the researcher's own background and experiences. Because the method of data collection was interactive, the researcher relied to some extent on her own feelings and impressions. By definition, the researcher and the interviewee influenced one another. Scharf (1986) states that subjects play a role in interpreting the findings; equally, the questions asked in the interview and follow-up inquiries were influenced by the researcher's values, theory, and biases implicit in the interview (Scharf, 1986). Because of this, the researcher kept detailed process notes concerning her own biases, values, and hunches to identify and to assess their influence on the data, the most salient of which are presented below.

I am 32 years old and was raised in a closely knit Jewish family and am the youngest of five children. Throughout my childhood and adult life I spent a significant amount of time involved in family activities: going on family vacations, talking frequently with my parents and siblings, celebrating the Jewish holidays, etc. My maternal grandparents lived with my family until my grandfather died when I ten years old. At the time of this writing, my grandmother continues to live with my parents. As a result of my family constellation and interactions, I have an ingrained sense of the responsibilities and commitment family members have for each other. I deeply value my connections with my family and feel that this positively influences my

ability to connect with others, including the couples I interviewed. I believe that this aided in creating a safe, supportive atmosphere during the interviews so that subjects felt freer to share their thoughts and feelings about their marriages.

I was raised in an upper middle class home, a characteristic shared with most of the participants in this study. My mother returned to school to get a Master of Arts degree in Education when I was five years old and then worked as a teacher of English as a second language throughout my childhood. My parents had traditional roles. My father was the provider for the family and made the financial decisions; my mother's primary responsibility was to the children and our home.

Education was strongly valued by my parents. It was assumed that my siblings and I would attend and excel at college. From an early age, I expected that I would have an advanced degree in psychology. Each of my parents has advanced degrees, an indication that education was highly regarded by my grandparents as well.

I had no formal religious upbringing and my family did not belong to a temple. However, my grandmother and other extended family members attended services during the Jewish holidays and I accompanied them on several occasions. My family did observe the Jewish holidays including Passover, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur. Learning about the significance of these traditions seemed secondary to the importance of having the family gathered together.

I am a clinician and researcher and have worked with children, adolescents, and adults. I am especially interested in identifying and analyzing transitional and developmental periods through which couples move.

As a result of my upbringing, I expected that family would be highly valued by the interviewees in the study, and that I would find significant involvement with the couples' extended families. I expected that in some cases, one of the couple's parents would have lived with them. Brayer (1968) and Leader (1975) support these expectations in discussing the Jewish tradition's familistic values. Leader (1975) found that individuals who leave their own families for marriage carry over to the in-laws a strong sense of family.

I expected that the couples would value education highly and that their children would have attended or currently be enrolled in college. I believed that religion would be a significant theme emerging from the interviews and expected that the importance of marrying within the Jewish religion would have been strongly ingrained in each of the participants by their parents. I believed that they would not have considered marrying someone who was not Jewish. I also expected that the couples' parents would have had a more formal religious upbringing than the couples themselves, and that the couples' children would have had even less formal religious education. I expected that the exception would be in the case of female children, as the popularity of Bat Mitzvahs has increased in the last 20 years or so. I assumed that culture and celebration of the Jewish holidays would be an important theme in all of the couples I interviewed, both in terms of their religious significance and familistic attributes.

I expected that female interviewees would have embraced the traditional roles of wife and mother, and that they would not have worked outside of the home at least until the children were in school. I expected that male interviewees would be the primary breadwinners and decision-makers in the family.

I expected the incidence of divorce in the couples' extended families to be low. Brodbar-Nemzer (1986b) found that the percentage of divorces among Jewish couples increases as one moves from Orthodoxy to Conservatism to Reform Judaism. None of the couples interviewed had strictly Orthodox beliefs; however, in several cases, their parents were Orthodox. Several of the couples were Conservative.

I assumed that my Jewish background (however informal), my level of education, and my clinical abilities were factors which would assist the interviewees to be comfortable in expressing their thoughts and feelings about their marriages. I expected that the women interviewees would be more open about their feelings than the men.

Chapter 4

Significant Themes

Introduction

This chapter presents 14 key themes related to marital stability identified in the interviews of 12 upper middle class Jewish couples. Each of these couples was married for 20 years or more and their youngest child was a minimum of 18 years old. The interviews were coded line by line to identify relevant themes. These themes were then organized into several categories: pre-marital themes, relationship themes, external factors, transitions, crises, and biological, psychological, and social factors affecting the marriage. These themes and relevant quotes from the transcribed interviews are presented in this chapter. Frequencies and chi-squares are provided for significant themes and gender differences are identified when evident. Each spouse was assigned the same first letter of the pseudonym to assist in the couple's identification.

Each interview was coded independently by the author and a male counterpart using the scoring system developed by O'Brien and Mackey (1990). Items pertinent to the developmental aspect of the study were added to this scoring system. There were 96 items in the original scoring system, and 28 items in the additional section. Interrater reliability statistics were calculated for both sections, using percentages. The reliability was .90 in both cases.

Pre-marital Themes

Several relevant pre-marital themes were identified in the participants' responses. They include themes about initial attraction, the participants' sense of how they knew their mate was "the one", family support for spouse choice, and their expectations or lack thereof, about working at the marriage.

Initial Attraction

Twenty of 24 participants indicated a positive initial attraction to their partners. Thirteen of these individuals gave physical attraction as the reason they were attracted to their partners. One man identified the sexual attraction he felt for his wife. Nine people identified personality as the cause for their positive attraction when they first met their spouse. Three others identified sense of humor as a key factor. Of the five individuals who identified personality and physical characteristics as central to their attraction to their spouses, the physical features were most often verbalized first. Alternatively, personality emerged as an important factor over the first few meetings.

Fred: Very strong sexual attraction. That much I can tell you...I just liked her smile and the way she acted, she felt good in my arms when we used to go dancing - went dancing that first night, in fact.

Greg: She was a very pretty girl...And I found her to be very, very compatible and easy to get along with, and very attractive.

James: She had a very nice, outgoing personality, and we communicated easily, there was no problem talking, no airs.

Four individuals were ambivalent about their partners after their initial meetings. Of these four, three were females, and one was male. Two females said they had met on a blind date and were not significantly impressed one way or the other in the beginning of their relationship. The third female said she had known her future spouse for some time, and emphasized that they saw each other most often amongst a group of friends. She was the only individual to state that the relationship began as a friendship and gradually changed into a romance. The man who was ambivalent identified career interests he and his future wife shared, and related little affect concerning his initial attraction to her.

Bernice: Maybe I was short and he's not that tall...I don't know. We've just known each other for so long, I really can't answer that. But I just, we just knew that someday we were gonna get married.

Debora: We were fixed up...he was quite nice looking and pleasant and to be honest, I wasn't all that impressed.

Certainty About Spouse Prior to Marriage

Participants were asked how they knew their spouses were the right match for them. All but one indicated their certainty in their decision to marry. Six people (5 women, 1 man), relied on the feelings they had about

their future spouses. Other reasons included personality, sense of compatibility with the other person, similar values, physical traits, and stability. Four people indicated a comfortability with their future spouses. They described the "ease" of being with their spouses, the feelings that they did not have to play a role or try to be someone they were not. Three other individuals identified similar interests, values, and religion as factors important in their choice of spouse. Two males and one female said they knew after their first date that they had met their future spouses. Each of the males clearly recalled telling a relative or a friend of their certainty.

> Fred: I liked her whole outlook, the way she acted, she was...she was laughing and light and I was a very serious individual, I guess I still am to a certain extent, and she was sort of just, she opened me up a little bit.

> Hilary: The same kind of background. He was just comfortable. He was kind, thoughtful, caring...I was just extremely comfortable with him. I trusted him implicitly. I always have.

> Lillian: I'm a very romantic person and he made my heart beat faster I guess.

> James: There was no role playing, no games, we just enjoyed each other. We liked being together. We enjoyed doing things together.

Julia: It was just one of those things that you met and you knew there were sparks flying and we just hit it off.

Gladys was ambivalent about Greg. In contrast to the other individuals, she emphasized her initial uncertainty and the need to think carefully about her decision.

Gladys: I don't know that I was sure. I can remember having doubts - not significantly, if it was significant, then I wouldn't have married him. But, it's a big step. And you think about it a little bit. But once the date was set, it never occurred to me to turn backwards.

Family Support for Spouse Choice

Eighteen people (7 men and 11 women) felt their families supported their spouse choices. Their mothers' approvals were central to their feelings of support: mothers played a key role in influencing their family's feelings toward their future in-law. The interviewer often had to ask individuals what they thought were their fathers' impressions. Although often viewed as influential in other family matters, fathers rarely expressed their opinion concerning their son's or daughter's spouse choice.

Cara: He (Carl) and my mother had a very good relationship, very good. He was very fond of her, and she was very fond of him.

Lillian: My mother always felt good about the fact that he had what she called a trade and that she was sure he'd always be capable of making a living.

Kim: They loved him...My father never comments, but I think he likes him.

Six of the participants indicated their family's disapproval or ambivalence about their spouse choice. One woman's family was uncertain if the man she brought home was Jewish or not and thus, had initial reservations about him until confirming his Judaism. In four instances, the lack of support focused on mothers who were jealous of the relationships their sons had with their chosen mates. One man felt his mother was sexually attracted to him and would be jealous of any woman he wanted to marry. Two others added that no one they brought home would be good enough for them because they were idealized by their mothers. In two cases, the men were the last sons to move out of the home, a factor which strengthened their mothers' resistance to letting them go.

Earl: I never brought any... young lady home before. And so they figured it was something unusual...there wasn't any great expression one way or the other.

Fred: I think my mother was a little jealous of my affection for her. My father loved her immediately, but he would have liked anybody I

brought home. They were very accepting, they had no choice. It was either take what I brought or not, so that they accepted her as she was and is.

Kent: My father I'm sure was very fond of her. My mother had the old fashioned mother/son relationship where nobody was going to be good enough for her son...I think she resented Kim for taking me away, because I was the last one to go away and I think she always had thought that I was going to be the one who was always going to be there for all time and she raised me, brought me into the world and raised me that way to think that way.

Expectations about the Marriage

Nineteen individuals had no expectations about having to work at the marriage. They said they had never thought about it, and that it was something they assumed was part of their role in life. Several people commented that times were different then, and that one did not process the relationship as much as couples do in present day. One woman thought she would not have to work at the relationship. She thought she "had it made" because she and her future spouse had similar religious and economic backgrounds and did not realize she would have to constantly work at it.

Bernice: I don't remember having to know about these things...I wouldn't have even known if you told me in those days that I was supposed to work at a marriage.

Fred: I sort of felt that it would be a blending of the two of us knowing that we're two strangers coming together and they'll make a life together and so that, I don't think I ever gave it any thought as far as working at it. It was just something that happened.

Ian: When we first got married, neither one of us had any deep thoughts about working at a marriage and such because everything seemed to go so smoothly.

Four individuals, two males and two females, expected to have to work at the relationship. One woman thought of it as a job that she would be working at, while the other woman realized she could not take things for granted. One male identified the commitment and its accompanying "rough times"; the other man described expecting an adjustment to marriage itself.

Julia: I think we always had that in the back of our minds that you couldn't take things for granted, that whatever you put into something, you were going to get out of; if you really always tried, and had enough respect for the other person, you wouldn't fail. You just had to be there for someone.

Relationship Themes

The individuals' styles of interaction with their spouses are presented in this section. These styles include: communication, roles, relatedness, and stability. Roles include marital behavior, division of tasks, and parenting

styles, while relatedness encompasses respect and trust, sensitivity and understanding, decision making, fairness and equity, psychosocial and physical intimacy, and satisfaction with the relationship.

Communication

Four individuals identified their communication as poor in the beginning of the marriage, while 11 felt mixed and nine reported good communication during this time. This assessment remained similar during the child rearing years. Communication improved from the child rearing years to the post-child rearing years of marriage: 16 participants said the communication was good and five said it was mixed. Three individuals said the communication was poor during this later stage. Two women identified the initial stage of marriage as a time when they were getting to know their spouses and felt they could not be themselves. They described their efforts to understand their spouses and their ways of thinking. Two men described the ease and idealization of the first few years.

> Julia: I think it was hard because you always are looking to know what the other person's thinking. You don't really know, you don't know a person, you don't know them after 30 years.

> Emily: I think, early on, you bite your tongue a lot, and you don't let out a lot of your true feelings...You sublimate it a lot...I was still trying to make an impression, I married the guy and I hardly knew him. And so, I was trying to be my better self.

David: Communication at the beginning when we were first married, and in love, whatever you want is fine.

The need for increased communication was identified by several couples during the child rearing years especially regarding decisions about the children. Couples were very aware of the need to support each other where the children were concerned. They consciously focused on not taking sides with the children even if they disagreed with their spouses. Communication was more difficult for some couples however, because the husbands were working more and women had child rearing responsibilities, leaving less time for communication.

Fannie: It was better. You know, we were talking. We would talk about any problem, if there was a problem with a child, we'd talk about it.

Brian: There was just very very little communication during that period. It was the worst period of our life. It was the only bad period.

All but one couple experienced their levels of communication as remaining stable or improving into the post-child rearing years. The lack of child rearing responsibility in this phase and retirement in four cases positively influenced the communication as the couples had more time to spend and enjoy together. In addition, individuals described truly knowing

each other by this stage of their lives. One couple described these years as "the best years" of their married life.

> Arthur: Alison and I are never at a loss for words when we're together. We've always got something to discuss...The two of us don't just sit and look at one another. There's always something going on in our lives that we want to share.

> Henry: I would say that it (communication) is fairly good. No marriage is perfect, and no marriage is without conflict. But I think we've learned to live with each other and accept each other.

Three people said their communication with their spouses remained the same throughout the marriage and four individuals identified a positive change in communication. This change was related to the individual's sense of comfortability with their spouses. As they grew to know each other better, the communication improved.

> James: One thing that Julia and I have always done, always, always, is we talk, constantly, to each other. I don't know what we talk about, and I don't know what we've had to talk about all these years, but we still communicate with each other...I think that's what's kept us together and kept us going...I think that's the most important thing that two people can do is communicate with each other. She's a better

communicator than I am. I keep a lot of things in. But we still, we kind of ramble on. We talk a lot of nonsense. But we just constantly talk.

Greg: Communication at some point was very limited but as time went on, communication between us is very good. I think we've always talked about whatever major decisions had to be made, we did it jointly.

Fred: I think in the overall, we were pretty good. I communicated more to her than she communicated to me in some phases of our life. I think we're probably better today as far as communicating with each other than we were during our early years of marriage. We've gotten to know each other much better. Our first, younger years of marriage were a grasping of each other, sexually grasping each other, and as the years have progressed, I've come to like her better as a person and as an individual than I used to.

Two couples realized problems in communication when the children left home. These couples' lives had centered on the children rather than on the marital relationship. Spousal communication occurred through the children; when the children were absent, spouses were left to communicate directly, a task which they were not used to and with which they had much difficulty.

Debora: I don't think that I realized that there was a lack of communication until my children left the house and went to college.

Kent: It seems like most of our conversation has to do with our kids...having the kids in the house at least eliminates silence that could present itself...I have no idea yet what it's gonna be like without kids. Or without somebody living in the house, other than the two of us. But I have a feeling it's gonna be tough.

Confrontation

Problems with communication often centered on the husband's lack of communication. Eleven men said they were more likely to avoid conflict during the beginning and child rearing years of marriage. Nine men continued to avoid differences in the post-child rearing years. Six women said they avoided differences during the initial years of marriage, while six said they confronted their spouses. There was a slight shift toward more confrontation over the three phases for the women: nine of 12 women were more likely to confront their spouses about a conflict during the post-child rearing years. Differences in the husbands' and wives' confrontational styles were evident ($X2$ (2) = 5.04, p<.05). Women were described by their spouses as more demonstrative, explosive, and vocal. Alternatively, men were said to be calmer, reserved, and less vocal. Two men described themselves as more emotionally expressive than their wives. They said their wives were more practical, while they tended to "blow up very quickly."

Emily: I blew my lid a lot. He's much calmer than I am. I have a low boiling point. And in that way, we're very opposite...I never kept it in...If I was upset about something, he knew it. Maybe the problem was I dwelled on it too much. No, he should understand. I think I made him understand me, and women in general. And I think he has a much broader aspect to his understanding now.

Lillian: I don't hold things back so I probably screamed at the time...He's not as vocal as I am. I'd have to drag it out of him...I'm more demonstrative.

Ina: Ian's the type when he gets mad he doesn't talk...And that's always been difficult too, with the wall of silence.

Roles

Twenty-three of 24 participants indicated they had a complementary style of relating with their spouses during the beginning and child rearing years, and 21 participants indicated this style during the post-child rearing years. This style is characterized by spouses complementing and offsetting each other's behaviors and personality types. For instance, if one spouse tended to be more outgoing, the other would be more withdrawn. The other participants related both in complementary and mutual styles, i.e., they tended to think and interact similarly, depending on the specific tasks and roles at hand. The couples' complementary styles are illustrated in their marital behavior and traditional roles, in their emotional responses to each

other, and in the division of tasks, including child rearing. Examples of each of these follow:

Marital Behavior

In general, the women in the sample were more expressive in their styles of communication, while the men were more practically, instrumentally oriented. Eight women were primarily expressive throughout their marriage, while 10 men were instrumental in the early years, and nine men were instrumental during the child rearing and post-child rearing years ($X2$ (2) = 8.78, p<.05). When asked what they wished had been different about their marriage in general, two women said they wanted their husbands to be more emotionally expressive. They wished for more outwardly expressed affection and more willingness to share a range of feelings including sadness and joy. The following quotes about communication describe these behaviors and feelings:

Arthur: I think that Alison had probably wished that I was more communicative...I suppose I've been able to keep things in that other people might want to just blurt out. I was always concerned about hurting people's feelings by saying the wrong thing. I'll hold my tongue a lot longer than she will.

Ian: She always claims that I don't talk enough...she always complained that I never expressed myself to her. I never talked as much as I should

and I felt that if I had something to say, I'd say it and if I didn't have anything to say, I won't say it.

Ina: That's one of the things I do miss in a marriage because you see some people - they're talking about every little thing they did from the moment both of them left the house and there's that little chatter, chatter, chatter. But he's not like that and he's never going to be like that...I would wish he would communicate a little more.

Lillian: I wish he'd cry more. I wish he'd be more sensitive to other things - you know, I wish he'd smell the flowers a little more.

Many couples spoke of their emotional needs for each other and their abilities to provide the balance necessary for a positive relationship. They described compensating for each other and turning to each other for direction and guidance.

Greg: We each go our separate ways, but we always meet...We accommodate each other...Now, everything isn't peaches and cream. There are times when she may not want to do something, and there are other times when I may not want to do something, and whoever doesn't want to do it gets their way. I mean, that's all there is to it. Why would you want to force somebody to do something? Okay? So you have disagreements, but it seems that whenever there's a

disagreement, we often the favor the person who is disagreeing. So, we don't do it.

Julia: I think I filled certain needs in him, and I know he filled certain needs in me. He needed some direction, which I think he looked to me for.

Kent: Her ability to offset the shortcomings that I might have. I think the combination of us collectively made a whole...in many ways, we're opposites...where I'm quiet, she's talkative.

All of the participants had traditional roles in their marriages: the men were the primary breadwinners and the women cared for the home and the children. There was an implicit agreement between the spouses that each would assume his or her role without much discussion or negotiation. Often, women worked in the early years of marriage and then stopped working once the children were born. Half of the women returned to work on a part time basis once the children were in school. Six individuals referred to the generational influence in their assuming traditional roles. Two couples were married during the war; the wives joined their husbands where the latter were stationed. Traditional roles were "taken for granted" and "assumed" during the early phases of marriage and in most cases, continued throughout the relationship. Individuals also spoke of the influence of their own parents: wives observed their mothers caring for the home and children, and husbands saw their fathers earning a living to support their

families. One woman, Cara, worked throughout her marriage, but was also primarily responsible for the children and the home.

> Greg: I envisioned my role to be the breadwinner, to make money, to advance myself, to be able to support my family in the best way possible, and did everything I could and consumed myself doing that. At the same time, I had a woman beside me who was doing what I think she thought her role was in bringing up a family and learning to be a cook and a housekeeper and a mother and actively involved in Temple.

> James: I think she saw her role as wife and mother almost at the onset of our marriage. Julia was like a young old fashioned kind of Jewish mother...I took care of the finances, I went out and I worked. I was working on my career and she took care of the house, and the kids.

> Debora: I was very much a conformist to the structured role. I was going to be a wife and a mother, and he was going to bring home "the bacon" although we were always Kosher.

Division of Tasks

Many tasks were divided into those associated with work and finances and those associated with the home and the children. Men were responsible for working and managing the finances, while women cared for the children and the home. Women were also characterized as the "social directors" in all

couples. It was clear in the majority of the interviews that each spouse had his or her separate domain, and that tasks were identified with one person or the other.

> Henry: The responsibilities and the duties have been pretty much separated...I think that her influence overshadows mine when it comes to the house and my influence may overshadow hers when it comes to finances.

> Earl: For things around the house, whether it's what kind of furniture or what kind of this or what kind of that, she's the boss, always has been. And what food to prepare and so forth, no matter how much I like something, she'll do it to keep me happy; that's essentially her department.

Child rearing.

Ten of the 12 couples in the sample reported handling their child rearing responsibilities separately. One of these couples shifted toward a more mutual style of handling these responsibilities in which the man increased his role in child rearing. Two women described their husbands as more involved with the children than their husbands perceived. In all cases, the women were the primary caretakers of the children, while the men worked outside of the home.

Carl: As far as bringing them up, Cara was the one who mostly handled the kids. And we enjoyed them. We had great times with the family. It was real pleasurable with all three of them...Cara just assumed that responsibility basically. She was the one that worked with the kids - she was a scout mother and all that business.

Kim: I often say that I was a single parent. I don't think he cared to be involved, but then I wondered, did I give him a chance to be involved. I personally feel that I have made 90% of all the child rearing decisions.

Debora: David is old-fashioned even for my generation in that he really felt that his role was to earn a living, and to provide for me and for the children. And he didn't see his job or his responsibility much beyond that. The rest of it was mine.

Greg: Gladys did most of the bringing up of our children. By that time, I was involved in going up the ladder a little bit and I was improving my position over time with the corporation. I was not home a lot. I could be away for a week or sometimes two weeks at a time so that I really wasn't involved an awful lot. I was more involved in my work than I was in my family.

Cara: They talk about fathers today being such great participants. Carl just did it. I nursed all three kids and that was the only thing he didn't

do with the children. He bathed the kids - he wasn't wild about feeding them. But, he always participated in everything.

Hilary: Any decisions were made together. I had them all day. At night, he would come home. He was a great father. He would spend time with them. They have lots of cute little memories of things that their father would do with them...In the other house, he'd sit and blow their hair dry.

Five couples emphasized family activities and their priorities of spending time with the children. These activities ranged from athletic pursuits to religious celebrations to going out to dinner and the movies.

Arthur: We always liked having our kids with us. We weren't parents who needed to get away from their children as some of our friends did.

Julia: He's a wonderful father, and was. We always went and did, skied with them, and anything physical and outdoorsy and athletic, we always did things as a family.

The role of disciplinarian fell primarily on the women because they spent more time with the children while their husbands worked. Two women said they relied on their husbands for punishing the children. Ten spouses emphasized the need to support one another in decisions regarding the children.

Alison: I raised the kids. He was always working. But we did agree on how to raise our children. There was never any, "no you shouldn't do this."

Len: With the kids, the big decision that we had made was that we are of one mind. We can't let the kids go to her and then to me. Whatever it was, we were firm. We were like one.

Ian: I was much more lax. She was the disciplinarian. I was the one who always said fine, you want to do that. I was always accused of giving them too much and she was the bad guy and I was the good guy. Not by design, but because she felt that I was just too lax...You had to back each other up...With her with the kids, if I wasn't around then she would make the decision. Whoever made the decision, we would each stand behind each other's decision.

Relatedness

Though six individuals experienced a difficult adjustment phase when first married, all felt either positive or mixed toward their spouses during this phase. They described getting along well, a freedom from the responsibilities of a family, and a feeling of connection.

Brian: We got along famously. I know it sounds dream-like, utopian, but it was simply true. We had a lot of fun. We loved each other right from the start.

Fred: We got along very well together. We had very few disagreements at first. After we got married, we didn't agree on everything but we'd argue it out.

During the child rearing years, there was a marked shift from a positive sense of relatedness to feeling less connected with their spouses. Eighteen individuals reported feeling positively connected to their spouses during the beginning years of marriage compared with 11 individuals having this experience during the child rearing years. Time spent raising a family and career pressures contributed to a feeling of disconnection at times.

Bernice: The beginning and the end are the same. The middle was awful in my life. I don't think I would've had children. I wish I didn't have children. I wasn't ready for them. We weren't rich enough.

Lillian: A lot of my time was taken up with the children. I think sometimes Len might've resented the attention away from him, but I tried to make sure that we spent a lot of time together.

The post-child rearing years were characterized by a shift back to a positive sense of relatedness. Nineteen people reported an overall sense of positive relatedness during these years. These couples felt closer to each other and had more time for each other. The children had left home, and in most cases, men were well-established in their careers and financial pressures were less.

Fannie: At first there was the love and the excitement, sex and love and everything; I think the best stage of our lives is right now. I'm really enjoying it being the two of us.

Greg: I think we laugh, we have fun together, we still respect each other, we still meet each other more than a 100% of the way.

Gladys: We really have a good rapport. Probably the best. Maybe it's because there aren't children around to divide our attention...I think with each child we probably became closer. And when they all left, we became even closer.

Respect and Trust

Respect and trust were two themes 21 individuals felt they gave to and received from their spouses. These themes were identified as crucial to maintaining a stable marriage. One man was ambivalent about the degree of mutual respect he felt in his relationship. He described his wife as getting carried away with her power in the relationship and not respecting his right to make decisions about his behaviors. At times, he also spoke negatively about her. One woman was tentative about the trust she had in her husband during the beginning years, but could not identify the reasons for her distrust. Another woman felt similarly during the post-child rearing years and said her feelings resulted from questioning her husband's financial judgments.

Henry: (We have) the highest regard for each other. She trusts me, I think, to the point that she knows that I wouldn't fool around with somebody, and I do travel quite a bit. And I trust her, knowing that she's by herself or on her own when I'm away. There has never been an instance where I would think otherwise and I don't think she would either.

Len: I trusted her with money. I would never question her being alone...I would never question her behavior.

Julia: My husband is a very moral man. He's very high caliber person in every aspect.

Sensitivity and Understanding

While 11 of 12 men viewed their wives as sensitive to their needs throughout their marriage, the feelings women had about their husbands' sensitivity varied greatly ($X2$ (2) = 9.06, p<.05). During the early years of marriage, four women perceived their husbands to be sensitive, four thought they were sensitive some of the time, and four said their husbands were insensitive. Husbands' responses regarding their own levels of sensitivity were consistent with those of their wives'. The reasons for this insensitivity were primarily related to the husband's focus on his career.

Cara: I don't think this is one of his highest scoring areas. But I feel that's the way he is. He would never be nasty or unkind, but I don't think he's the most sensitive person in the world.

James: Not as sensitive as I should be. There are times when I get preoccupied with my own thoughts and my own problems, whether it was loss of my career or, I was very insensitive and she was very sensitive, very supportive.

Brian: I was incredibly insensitive when I look back. I was not there. It was early in my freelance career. I was working, often until midnight.

David: I never sent flowers. I was never the romantic, anything like that. Even with jewelry, I used to say, "If you want something, go buy it."

There was a dramatic increase from the beginning years of marriage to the post-child rearing years in husband sensitivity: seven of 12 women viewed their husbands as sensitive during the post-child rearing years, and only one continued to state that her husband was insensitive to her needs. The four others were mixed, stating that their husbands were sometimes sensitive and sometimes insensitive to them.

Gladys: I think he's more sensitive to me now. I think part of it is because he is not distracted. He wasn't a workaholic, but he was very involved with his work.

Ian: As far as being sensitive to what she was going through at that point in time and what she needed, I probably lacked a bit of that...There were times when there were pressures on the job that I felt she didn't understand everything I was going through...Now I think it's on a pretty even keel. Now that we're rattling around this place by ourselves. We have much more time to ourselves.

Spouses' levels of understanding for each other were equivalent to those found in sensitivity. Husbands felt more understood by their wives throughout the marriage, and wives varied greatly in their perception of their husbands' understanding during the beginning years (X2 (2) = 6.09, p<.05). Seven of the females felt their husbands did not understand them during the child rearing years. Two women identified their husbands' insensitivity to biological changes including PMS and menopause. A similar shift in understanding as in sensitivity was noted: eight of the 12 female interviewees felt understood by their husbands during the post-child rearing years, as compared with three feeling understood in the early years of marriage.

Hilary: I think the only thing he really doesn't understand is what most men do not understand: PMS, menopause, all the things that go on inside a woman.

Ian: Now she knows me like a book. I mean she can tell you what I'm going to do and what I'm going to say before I do it or say it. And I think I the same with her.

Decision Making Styles

Individual decision making styles varied. Of the 16 people who were considered "logical" in their decision making styles, 11 were males and five were females ($X2$ (2) = 10.25, p<.01). Males were more likely to plan and think things through, while women relied more on their feelings and intuition. One male had a more impulsive style and described his thinking as emotional and impractical when compared with his wife. Each of the seven people who had an intuitive style were women. These women were more likely to be taken care of by their husbands than were the women described as predominantly logical in their decision making styles. In general, the women described as logical had more responsibilities.

Carl: I think she's a little more analytical than I am. She'll frequently say, "what do you think they meant by that?" I say, "forget it. that's what they said."

Earl: If there was a flare-up, we'd sort of calm down a little bit and then take it up again. As far as blowing fuses is concerned, I'm less apt to blow a fuse than she.

Ian: My thinking would be emotional. Hers would be more active, more practical.

Fourteen people said they made their decisions separately from each other, while six said they made decisions mutually in the early years of marriage. In several cases where decision making occurred separately, there was a clear split around work and domestic decisions. Women were more likely to have responsibility for the home and to make decisions about the children, while men made more of the financial and career decisions. In four cases, the man was clearly identified as the decision maker. Three couples identified the wife as having primary responsibility for decision making.

Debora: It wasn't shared. Certain things he didn't care about and left totally to me. On things that we disagreed about, I think most of the time, I did it my way.

Cara: I always had free reign in terms of the children, needs for the children, and needs for the home.

Brian: I don't mean to suggest that Bernice is meek or that I dominate her because I don't think that's true, but I think all of those decisions essentially have been mine because Bernice wants them to be.

Bernice: I had nothing to say. That's the way it should be. I like that he's the breadwinner and I am the wife and we talk things over. Now,

because of woman's lib, I have a lot more to say. In the old days, he told me I had nothing to say about it. But I respect his opinion.

Len: She would make most of the decisions and if I disagreed, she would coerce me in a womanly way. I guess she has got me to lean along the lines of her thoughts rather than mine...Her ability to make proper decisions is uncanny and I would always listen to her even if I disagreed with her because she's usually right.

Kim: That's one of the things about my marriage that has caused some tension because he won't make a decision...I think he's basically very insecure and he's so afraid of making the wrong decision, that he always says, "it's up to you." And I don't want that. I want the husband to be more in control.

Kent: Major decisions, you know, one of us would ask the other what we thought, but I think, probably both of us already knew the answer that we wanted to hear...We have one flaw and that's I think both of us try to please the other one to the point of almost a fault and don't want to make a decision thinking that it might hurt the other one. And we get into a lot of arguments about decision making, to this day.

Women were much more likely to perceive the decision making process as mutual than were men. Five of the six participants identifying their decision making styles as mutual during the initial and child rearing

years were women (X2 (2) = 6.67, p<.05). Four men identified their decision making styles as variable in the initial years of marriage. There was little change in decision making style from the initial years into the child rearing years. However, the post-child rearing years were marked by a shift toward more mutual decision making by the couple: seven women and two men identified their decision making styles as mutual, and an additional four men thought they were variable.

Emily: We always talked things out...All our decisions, especially major decisions, were always made together. About the children too...no big decision was ever made unless we both agreed to do it. I never defied him say, and went out and did something that he didn't approve of.

Ian: I think that probably most of what we've done since we've been together has been as a couple. The goals have been as a couple, not individual. Neither one of us made any single decision that we would move without talking to the other. It was always a mutual decision...If they were major decisions, they would take place between the two of us.

Arthur: She seemed to have wanted me to make the decisions, although we've turned that around in later years...I used to handle the checkbook. I used to handle all of these things. She's probably doing most of those things today...maybe Alison looked to me to make the decisions, so that I just accepted that role, but as I say, in these latter

years, that's really changed a lot...Sometimes people don't like to make a decision because if it's a bad decision they may be held responsible.

Fairness and Equity

The majority of the participants reported a sense of fairness and equity in their marriages. During the initial and child rearing years, 18 people thought their marriages were equitable and 19 people indicated a sense of fairness and equity during the post-child rearing years. These couples discussed the sense of sharing, give and take, and balance in their marriages. Five individuals felt mixed about the sense of fairness in their marriages. In contrast to the couples who felt a sense of equity and fairness, these individuals described their relationships as unbalanced at times. Two of the men in this category described their wives as giving more to the relationship. Each of these couples felt this style of relating was satisfactory.

Carl: We've always looked for that balance, and...when we felt there was an imbalance, it was discussed and points were brought up, and the agreement was reached after that.

Kent: Throughout the early stages I think I did my thing. She did her thing and it was a combination of things that were needed to make it work. I think there's an equity today as well. I think we each do our share.

James: A marriage is never 50-50. One always gives more than the other. Fortunately for me, Julia's a very giving person, and I'm more selfish than she is. When I want something, I want it, and she will end up giving in...It'll always be out of balance some way, because that's just the way we are. And I think that's okay. It's worked very well for us and our relationship.

One women, Bernice, felt that her marriage was unfair during the beginning years of marriage because she did not get the respect that she thought she deserved and the opportunity to voice her opinions because she was not making a financial contribution to the family. She did state that her husband Brian eventually changed his attitude during the post-child rearing years. Three women who were ambivalent about the sense of fairness during the beginning years, thought their marriages were unfair during the child rearing years. These women described the increased responsibility associated with caring for the children in addition to the household and social life responsibilities they already had.

Bernice: I really got upset because one time he said...I wasn't bringing anything into the house so I had no right to comment and I was to keep out of it...now he understands how wrong he was.

Kim: No, there's not been equity. I mean, I seem to wear the pants in the family...A lot of times I used to complain that I didn't think it was fair that...when I was working and I had the kids at home...I had to still

do all the housework. I had to do all the cooking. I never got any help. I didn't think that was fair.

Intimacy

Psychosocial intimacy.

Feelings of intimacy were similar to the individuals' sense of relatedness in their marriages described previously. More males than females characterized their relationship as intimate during all three phases of the marriage. During the beginning years, 14 individuals (9 men, 5 women), felt a positive sense of intimacy with their partners, while eight individuals (5 women, 3 men) felt they had some intimacy in the marriage. Two women felt they had no intimacy in the initial years of marriage. One of these women was separated from her husband during the war when she became pregnant, and the other never felt intimate with her husband, stating they were never able to communicate about feelings or their relationship. The most pronounced gender difference regarding intimacy appeared in the child rearing years: seven men and one woman felt a sense of positive intimacy, while 14 individuals (9 women, 5 men) said the degree of intimacy varied during these years ($X2$ (2) = 7.64, p<.05). Lack of time and energy due to child rearing and career pressures contributed to the lack of intimacy. Two people discussed their frustrations around the lack of intimacy and connection:

Kim: He cannot express emotion...I can't talk to him about things that make me crazy because he either doesn't want to hear it or just can't relate to it.

Debora: He doesn't talk about feelings, so I don't know if he has them. He never brought me flowers. He's not very romantic. He says he loves me, and I think he probably does, but he doesn't notice (me)...I think I probably love him...He's not my friend, and he's not my companion, but he is my husband.

Seventeen people felt positive about the degree of intimacy with their spouses during the post-child rearing years. The caring and connection the individuals felt for one another is described in the following examples:

Emily: In our marriage, we've never really needed anybody else. Because he's my best friend, and I think I'm his best friend...what keeps the marriage together is when you care more about the other person than you do about yourself, when you lose and give up your selfish part of your life.

Fred: I always felt very caring and very warm toward her and still do. As far as I was concerned, I liked her so much that nothing she could have done could get in the way of things.

Physical intimacy.

The majority of the participants had a good sexual relationship throughout their marriage, with only one female describing a negative sexual relationship for the duration of her marriage. Twenty individuals (11 men, 9 women) enjoyed a positive sexual relationship with their spouses in the

beginning years of marriage. Five individuals described a shift toward a mixed perception of their sexual relationships while they were rearing their children. Problems were primarily attributed to lack of time for each other, which negatively affected feelings of emotional and physical intimacy.

Alison: I'm like, I want it, I want it, I want it. But Arthur is always there. He's just very easy and sweet and gentle and he's very nice. We have a very nice sex relationship.

Gladys: Very good rapport, a lot of respect, and we both like it. Never been demands beyond, if one doesn't like something, it's respected, the viewpoint is respected.

Debora: I could say as a good wife I did what was expected of me. Sex was never one of the strong points of our marriage. I don't know whose fault that was. David was always satisfied.

Kim: It's nonexistent, but I'm glad now that at least we can say the word, "sex" or even talk about it, because for years, it was just not even an issue. I think that is my fault 'cause I think there was a period in my life that I just didn't like him. So I didn't want any physical relations with him.

Julia: In the beginning, it's all the passion that should be there is there. Then you have children and it does take somewhat of a back seat. I

don't say back seat as far as importance, but I think that even frequency
- I mean, you're so damn tired that, it's just not key.

In the post-child rearing years, two couples described their negative
sexual relationships, while eight couples had a positive sexual relationship.
The latter enjoyed the increased opportunities for spontaneity. There was a
qualitative difference in the way couples thought about sex when compared
with the earlier phases. Several individuals described feeling closer to their
spouses and thus more intimate, despite less sexual contact.

Emily: Things are a lot different when you get older. It doesn't
preclude that everything is gone. It's just that it's not as frequent...You
taper off when you're older. It becomes different. But the affection is
still there.

Greg: It was very exciting in the beginning. And I'd say it actually has
flowered over time...The frequency is slightly different, but it has been
very good as far as I'm concerned...I think it's actually better than it was
in the beginning...I'd say there's more affection.

Julia: It's not like you are when you're 25, but you get the same sparks,
just a little less frequently. And even if it isn't that, there is a feeling of
closeness. It takes on different forms.

Sixteen people (8 men, 8 women), identified physical touching as a positive, important theme in the initial years of marriage. There was a significant shift in reported physical touching from the early years to the child rearing years, especially for men. During these years, 12 individuals (4 men, 8 women) indicated touching as an important part of the relationship, while six individuals (5 men, 1 woman) felt the degree of physical touching varied. Six individuals (3 men, 3 women) identified a clear lack of touching during the child rearing years. There was a slight shift in these findings in the post-child rearing years: 13 individuals (6 men, 7 women) felt positively about their physical, nonsexual relationships while six individual (4 men, 2 women) felt negatively about it.

Hilary: We're a very cuddly touchy huggy family...with my husband and I, it wasn't always sex, it was just, just hugging. You know, lying next to each other...I can't sleep unless I am touching his body.

James: I'm not a very touchy person. And Julia I think, might have been, but I kind of got that out of her. We don't hold hands. We don't put our arms around each other. I don't like to see that in public. I'm uncomfortable with it.

Debora: I guess it (frequency of touching) changed when I started to feel that he was totally insensitive to my mood.

Henry: Depends on the mood I think. I would say that on an overall basis, yeah...I think when the kids were young, I don't know if we really had too much time to (touch)...it's almost like a bell curve - it continues to go in waves, sometimes more so than others.

Satisfaction with the Relationship

Only one female described her dissatisfaction with her spouse and identified her lack of confidence to leave the relationship as a factor in maintaining stability. During the beginning, child rearing, and post-child rearing years, 22, 16, and 19 individuals respectively, described their relationship as satisfying. These individuals spoke directly about the loving, caring, and supportive relationship they had with their spouses. Six of them said their spouses meant "everything" to them. Eight of the 24 participants identified their spouses as their best friends. Three people said they would not know what they would do without their partner.

Bernice: I never had a better friend. I adore my husband. We're terribly much in love. We've always been in love. We're more in love now than we've ever been and it just gets better and better.

Henry: It's a comfortable feeling - the interaction, the sense of responsibility, the sense of being happy - that we can do things together. The pleasure of seeing something pleasant happen to the other one.

Julia: I think that you have to be supportive whether your whole heart is in it sometimes or not. I think you have to show that you're supportive of whatever decision is made by the other person.

James: Julia's my best friend, and I know I'm her best friend so I think that's the most important thing in a marriage.

Emily: We just enjoyed being together. In our marriage, we've never really ever needed anybody else. Because he's my best friend, and I think I'm his best friend. I think what keeps the marriage together is when you care more about the other person than you do about yourself.

Stability

Five individuals identified a sense of stability and cohesion in their relationships despite rough times they had endured. In addition, they noted that their relationships had matured over time. Fifteen people identified spouse personality as a reason for remaining in the relationship, including sense of humor, honesty, and a positive attitude. Eight people discussed the need for compromise, flexibility, and tolerance for the other person as keys to a stable marriages. An implicit understanding developed over time that one's spouse was "always there" for them.

Ian: There were a couple of times when the meter jumped, but most of the time, it's been rather flat...I find very few if any bad things about our relationship. I don't think I could've been as happy or stayed with anybody as long other than Ina. I think it's a damn good fit. I really do.

Carl: We didn't know what we were doing when we first got married. This relationship just matured and developed and grew stronger as the years passed. Today, it's pretty much like a rock.

Fred: I feel closer to her than I've ever felt. I mean, mentally and physically and really, if ever two people have ever blended beautifully, she and I have blended.

Kim: His honesty and his integrity and the attempts he's made at doing things to make me happy. His goodness.

Arthur: Knowing when to keep your mouth shut...I really was always very concerned about not hurting her and not saying things that hurt her.

Carl: Each has their own little whims and idiosyncrasies - the main thing is accepting these things and learning to adjust...flexible and understanding are the key factors.

Emily: The compromise kind of thing, it's very important in a marriage. Even though there are things which maybe you don't appreciate, you don't approve of...nothing is that vital that you can't agree or compromise - nothing is carved in stone.

External Factors

External factors affecting the marriage include the influence of finances, religious and cultural values, and extended families including family of origin, similarity of the individuals' marriages to their parents' marriages, and parental attitudes toward divorce. The relative importance of these factors and their impact on the marriages is addressed in this section.

Extended Families

During the beginning years, there was a spousal difference in the perceived influence of the extended families. Four of the males described their extended families as having a negative influence on the marriage while no females had this perception of their own families. The difficulties for these men focused on their mothers' resistance to "giving" their sons to their future spouses. This negative influence continued until the husband's mother's death in two cases. During the beginning years, 11 females vs. five males said their families positively influenced their relationship. This discrepancy lessened during the child rearing years as 15 individuals (6 men, 9 women) viewed their extended families as positively influencing the spousal relationship during this period. In the post-child rearing years, 17 individuals (7 men, 10 women) identified a positive relationship with their families.

Those who had negative relationships resulted from family of origin problems and were more of a continued aggravation than a problem between the spouses.

> Fannie: I think she (Fred's mother) was happy that he was getting married, and I guess she liked me all right, but it was very hard for her to give up her son.

> Kim: I don't think his mother wanted him to get married...And she commented a couple of times that I was beneath him intellectually and that I should probably go on to finish college...I don't know if it was me personally or if she just didn't want her baby to get married...I think she accepted me one we got married.

> Bernice: They saw that this wasn't someone that was going to sit on his hands and my father always claimed to be an excellent judge of character and he thought Brian was just everything he would want to support in every way.

Similarity of Parent's Marriage

There was variation concerning the similarity of the participants' marriages to their parents' marriages. Six individuals felt they had primarily similar marriages and six felt they had primarily dissimilar marriages to their parents. The remaining 12 individuals identified similarities and dissimilarities. Similarities were found in importance of the family and in

stability of the marital relationship. Four individuals identified the love their parents felt for each other as something they had replicated in their own marriages.

Henry: I think that probably the most important thing that I learned from their marriage, was the love that they had for each other.

Alison: I know I've brought into this marriage what I saw at home. I certainly know I brought their ideals.

One common difference was in the amount of time couples spent together: parents spent less time together because of the need to work to support the family. One man said his parent's focus was totally on the survival of the family. Another difference was in the perceived lack of equality and control in the parents' marriages. Ten of the participants revealed that their mothers were the dominant force in their parents' marriage, while eight identified their fathers as dominant. The remaining six individuals said their parents shared the power and had equitable relationships. Other differences were in the lack of education and financial instability in the individuals' parents' marriages. Three of the participants' parents, suicided: two were fathers and one was a mother.

Parental Attitudes Toward Divorce

Twenty-two individuals' parents disapproved of divorce. These individuals reported that divorce was a "dirty word" during their childhood,

and that no thoughts about the possibility of divorce were ever raised. Two women said their parents were not disapproving of divorce and identified several cases of divorce within the extended family.

Alison: That was like saying the word AIDS today...It was such a horrible thing.

Greg: If a person was divorced, there was something awful wrong with the person and they were treated almost like pariahs.

Kim: There was a lot of divorce in my mother's extended family. A lot of her nieces and nephews were divorced. It wasn't looked upon as some horrible thing.

Finances

Four couples experienced some financial strain during their first years of marriage; the majority, however, described finances as having a positive influence over the entire marital relationship. Eighteen individuals said finances positively influenced the marriage during the child rearing and post-child rearing years. Each man was financially successful in his work, as family incomes ranged from $60,000 to $125,000 annually. Financial strain occurred for three couples during the child rearing years when the men lost their jobs for a period of time. This strain was felt for two other couples during the post-child rearing years after the men had retired. These couples

spoke of needing to change their spending habits and adopting a different mind set. No couple however, was experiencing financial hardship.

Greg: We're not the wealthiest people but we are above average by far, and we have over the years had a lot of good fortune; we have a fairly sizable income even now; financially we don't even have to think about anything. We can do almost anything we want to do.

Len: We just adapted to our income. If we had more income, we'd be traveling more and doing more things.

Ian: It was very tough. All of a sudden, you couldn't do the things that you wanted to do...I felt naturally very guilty, that I'm not providing the way I'm supposed to.

<div align="center">Religion and Culture</div>

Religion

Religion played a role in varying degrees in 11 of the 12 couples interviewed. Each of these 11 couples had a temple affiliation during one point in their marriage; the majority became temple affiliated when their children were old enough to attend Hebrew School. Five joined Reform temples, five joined Conservative temples, and one joined an Orthodox temple. Each of the 11 couples emphasized the importance of providing their children with a formal Jewish education. All of the male children in these families were Bar Mitzvah, as were most of the females. Temple attendance

dropped dramatically for seven of the couples following the children's Bar Mitzvahs.

Arthur: We did care about the kids having an understanding of Judaism and being part of the Jewish community. Morally we've kind of kept to Jewish laws...Alison made it very interesting that the kids, all 3 of them, wanted to go to temple...Judaism has been important. I like being Jewish and most of our friends are Jewish.

David: I once said to my kids, " when you marry a girl, she should be healthy and everything else, but a nice Jewish girl" - that's all I wanted. It was very important to me...the main thing is that we wanted to be a Jewish family. And we were. We tried to impart it to our children.

Emily: I always resented the fact that I didn't know anything about my own Judaism. So I was determined that my kids weren't going to be brought up that way. And in addition to trying to learn myself, both kids joined the temple, because that was more acceptable to me having had no background...we became firmly entrenched...both boys had complete educations so that they know what they are...it's been very necessary in the home.

Despite their involvement with the temple, religion was a source of tension for three of the couples. For two of these couples, the tension centered on the wife's frustration with her husband's level of involvement

in the temple, i.e., she wanted him to be more involved. For the third couple, the wife had wanted to join a Reform temple while the husband had always belonged to a Conservative temple. The wife joined the husband's temple, but was never comfortable there and ceased attending for many years. One couple was reared in the Jewish religion, but did not practice Judaism: they neither attended temple nor celebrated the Jewish holidays.

Gladys: Greg enjoyed it just as much as I because the Rabbi was just a pleasure to listen to. But he was lazy about going. And I would get frustrated sometimes because I never would go by myself. So as a result of his not going, I didn't get there as much as I liked. That probably is the biggest bone of contention in our life, but I've never made it a problem.

Hilary: We joined the conservative Temple because that's where his parents were members, and I hated it. I still hate it. We had disagreements about that...I resented the fact that we had to join his Temple...I didn't go for a long time. And then one year, I didn't tell him, I walked into Temple. He started to cry. He's a very sensitive man. So, even though I don't believe in it, I show up because it makes him happy.

Ina: I wanted to try to get more involved in the temple and doing things and he really wasn't that open to it so the kids went through just the regular - the Bar Mitzvahs and confirmations. And go on the

high holidays, but whenever we went on the high holidays, we'd go in, we'd go out. You know, I'd say, "oh, let's visit and chat." "I want to go home." You know, that type of thing...I used to get mad at him because I'd say, "you're not supporting me."

Brian: Neither of us is religious. Bernice's father taught her that any religion she needed was the Golden Rule and I'll go along with that. I don't believe in commercial religion at all. We were both brought up Jewish. But brought up Jewish in both of our cases, curiously, was a very loose term.

Culture

Similar to religion, Jewish culture was important to 11 of the 12 couples. Each of these couples celebrated the holidays with their families, and several discussed the importance of instilling Jewish values into their children. There was a positive relationship between Jewish culture and values, and family togetherness in each of the 11 couples. Examples of this relationship follow:

Carl: Even though we don't go to temple, Cara always has the family over for Passover, for Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and other holidays, so there's always been this cultural tie as far as the kids are concerned for the whole family, and I think that's an important factor...It's just a matter of family togetherness.

Greg: I think that out of the life of Judaism, that I believe my parents expressed to me, and I think I heard in the Sunday School, was that we should have respect for everyone and I think that we've tried to imbue that in our kids and I think they do have respect for others...we belong to the National Conference of Christians and Jews and participated with 1,500 people. There were four Jews and six Catholics and half a dozen Protestants, and I heard the same things from all of them...the values expressed were all the same.

Len: We did try to instill (values)...we feel very Jewish...Jewish values are compassion, understanding, charity...fairness. And I think that's something that the kids have all come out with.

Transitions

All couples identified transitional periods in their marriages. These periods included the couples' initial adjustments to their marriages, the changes associated with rearing children and then separating from them, and changes related to career and retirement. The majority of the transitions occurred during the child rearing years. Three individuals felt that the transitions during this period positively impacted their relationship, while the remaining 21 individuals felt either that the transition had a negative impact or felt mixed about the transition and its consequences on the marriage.

Initial Adjustments

The transition from a single lifestyle to marriage was recognized as a difficult period by several couples, although the majority experienced the change as smooth and without problems. In general, the women had more difficulty adjusting than the men. The reasons for this varied: six women had never been away from home before, four had conflicted relationships with their in-laws, and two had difficulty transitioning from working outside of the home to caring for a household.

Fred: She made adjustments: the first thing is she had to share me with my mother, which was an adjustment that I was very much aware of and didn't know how to alleviate in that I was working for my mother.

Arthur: Those first 6 months we lived with my parents. And for Alison, that was a disaster and in later years, I understood that that was a very grave mistake to make. You shouldn't come back to the nest. Not when you're first married. You need to strike out on your own...it was more difficult for her and we had a lot of crying sessions some evenings. She was lonely; she was missing her family, too. So there was a little bit of tension those first six months.

Having Children

While most couples discussed the transition to having children as a positive time in their lives, four individuals described the stress that this

change brought about in their relationships with their spouses.

David: Being number one, I became number two.

Hilary: I think he wanted to spend more time with me and I didn't have it. I felt like I was being pulled a lot of times. I felt like, where's me? For a while, I was kind of lost. And sometimes I'd let it go and other times I guess I'd get annoyed.

Lillian: I think our first child certainly - you know, I was enveloped by this little thing and I remember Len saying, "we waited 9 months for this?" You know, a kid that couldn't talk? Couldn't say "hi Daddy." Sometimes I think he resented all the attention our first child took and I think that was a change there. I think he alerted me to it. I could see that he was a little jealous of all the time that was taken away from him. We tried to work it out.

<u>Parenting During Adolescence</u>

Three individuals experienced problems with their children during adolescence, and six said it was a difficult but manageable time. Fifteen people recalled their children's adolescence which occurred from the 1950s to the 1980s as times they enjoyed. Some couples referred to the 1960s as a time of social unrest with which their children had to deal, while others spoke of the 1980s rap music of which their children were fond. The problems adolescent children experienced fell into two categories: lack of peer

relationships and value differences with parents. Three individuals said one of their children was withdrawn and lacked social relationships. Six individuals identified struggles for independence and control and changing values as problem areas. Not surprisingly, all of the individuals in this latter group were adolescents during the 1960s. Couples' reflections on their children's adolescence follow:

Carl: They were very good kids...they used to come home and tell us that their friends, this one smoked marijuana, and this one was buying heroin, and they fortunately didn't get involved. Whether that's part of their upbringing or their own personal fortitude, I don't know, but it worked...they got into that rap music which we didn't like but, that was the worst thing. We used to kid them about it and they used to kid us and it wasn't any big deal.

Hilary: Adolescence was tough because our older one was tough. She wanted her independence and he and I were controlling people...He was supportive, there was some arguing as to what to do with the older one...There were times when he would yell that I wasn't supporting him. And basically, because he was being too strict. It was tough.

James: Another thing that made our marriage run relatively smooth was that our kids never got into the trouble or the problems that teenagers get into.

Husband's Career Changes

Eight individuals identified transitions during the child rearing years which were directly related to the husbands' careers: the need to relocate due to change in employment, job loss, the long hours men worked, and starting a business. Four couples identified moving due to the husband's change in jobs as a stressful time during their marriages. Each of the moves impacted the wives more than the husbands: while the husbands adapted to their new jobs, the wives had primary responsibility for the house, establishing new friends, and child rearing.

> Brian: When we moved she was pregnant with the first. That became a desperately serious problem for Bernice. Not for me...I think Bernice was going out of her mind then. If we ever had problems, it was because of that...She was stuck with two infants with whom she couldn't communicate anything. It was really a disaster.

> Gladys: I just know that every move was an adjustment and there were about six of them. It had to have affected me a little bit. Nine of the husbands either had their own businesses or worked in a family business during at least one period of the marriage. Four individuals described the long hours and stresses associated with these types of businesses. One couple reported a decrease in stress when the husband went into business for himself.

Arthur: In trying to start this business it was really difficult at first and I was working all kinds of hours...I'd work during the day, come home and have dinner, go back and work at my own business at like 7:30 and work until one in the morning.

Bernice: When he decided to quit his job he came home and he was afraid to tell me that he'd quit his job and he was going to go into business for himself, my reaction was, "oh, that's wonderful. I'm sick of you going in town. That'll be fun." I just thought it sounded exciting.

Children Leaving Home

Eleven of 12 couples felt positively about their children leaving home. Initially, three of the couples felt either awkward or that it would be a difficult adjustment to being alone at home. Five couples described the relief and strengthening of their relationship with their spouse when the children left home.

Arthur: When the children were growing up, I liked being the decision maker and that was quite a shock to me when my oldest son at some stage said, "No I don't want to go with you guys. I'm going out with my friends." That was a tough one to take and then realizing that his brother's right behind him and he's going to do the same thing. It was kind of that beginning of letting go. I found that a little difficult...It was a traumatic time for Alison, the empty nest syndrome...It did bother

me but not as much as her because I was out working all day, but she was moping at home...that was how that stage started and then we began to like it very much, having no one at home. We could just pick our tails up and do anything we wanted - take off and go.

Henry: In the beginning, we were kind of concerned that, you know, that we had always been together, we always did things together with our kids. We very rarely went on a vacation by ourselves...The first summer was very tough. The fact that they had always been with us, and the years went by - it became easier and easier, and we were looking forward to it...we were just afraid that we weren't going to get along...they made the buffer if we ran into a conflict.

Hilary: I think neither one of us were quite sure what we would do with each other - whether we'd be able to even talk to each other because we'd been surrounded by kids for so long. We had a good time. Neither one of us said anything to the other about being left alone. But we both felt it was nice. So we realized we probably could survive without our girls.

Brian: I'll tell you one thing that made life better - was when the kids left us...The kids, more than any single thing in our life, I think are the cause of many of the problems. They have problems. They're expensive. Sometimes they're terribly difficult to get along with.

Sometimes they don't live up to your expectations, although they're living up to their own. And they deny you a great deal of freedom.

Kim: I told him I was going to divorce him (Kent) the day (her son) went to school, but instead, it got better...I must've changed. I became less selfish and more accepting of his ways. So the marriage is much better than it was. Maybe while he (her son) was home, I was able to get - and he's also supportive - he's a little bit more sensitive than his father. Maybe I was getting things from my son that I wasn't getting from my husband...it was a good transition.

Retirement

At the time of the interviews, five of the men were retired. All but one of these couples described a smooth transition into this period of their lives. One couple had a negative reaction to the husband's retirement and at the time of the interview, was working on resolving the problems brought about by the retirement.

Fannie: Fred isn't under the pressures he was when he was in business. He's a more relaxed person, and so it just makes it easier because I don't have to be concerned about his being uptight with financial things...It was just perfect right from the beginning.

Gladys: It was relatively easy. I had a little bit of an adjustment, because I had always been boss in my kitchen, although he used to come in and

putter. And all of a sudden, there he was in the kitchen, and interfering. That really was a big adjustment - somebody saying "Why are you doing that?" and "Don't you think you should do so and so?"...I never needed that.

David: I wish I could have worked twenty hours a week. This stage in life makes it a little more difficult. Not for me, for my wife...she's not used to having someone around. She could do whatever it is she wants or whatever it is. She has lived a very active life.

Crises

Participants identified a number of crises which affected the marital relationship. The majority of these crises occurred during the child rearing years and generally involved one of two areas: unemployment and illness (child, spouse or parent). In most cases, individuals were aware of tensions brought on by crises, but felt supported by their spouses, especially during crises which involved the children, the spousal parents, or unemployment. Tension between spouses was more problematic when the crisis concerned the health of one of the spouses.

Child Related Crises

Five couples recalled child related crises and an additional two couples experienced miscarriages. The child related crises ranged from severe illness to a daughter entering a cult. All of the women described the support they received from their husbands during these times. While they were aware of

the existing tension, they said they did not feel tension in their relationship with their spouse. Instead, they described feeling united as a couple.

Alison: If we could've had problems, that's the time that a strong marriage was important because an illness is very difficult - you're fighting for the same goal. But it's so hard. He was always wonderful and he was always there for me...I was very distraught.

Fred: I think we became closer when she had the miscarriages. I was more supportive of her and maybe she leaned on me more in those years.

Lillian: He (her son) had a tumor of the brain. When he was sick we were each other's support...I don't know if I was his strength at all, but he certainly was mine.

Unemployment

Job loss and its resultant unemployment was experienced by three of the men during the child rearing years. In each case, the wives went to work to provide financial support for the family. Although financial strain was experienced by each of these couples, the spouses described their interactions with each other as supportive.

Ian: There was a couple of times when we got fired from a job and came home and had no job. That was a family crisis that she beared up

with - she handled I think better than I did until we got back on our feet. She was always extremely supportive during that time.

Kent: We've had a couple of situations job-related crises where I've been out of work...When there is a time of a crisis such as that, she's very supportive...The couple of times I've been out of work, she has been very supportive and I've been able to convince her to go out and get a full time job...she's accepted that responsibility pretty well, which leads me to believe she really does feel the desire to keep everything together.

Spouse Illness

Tension between spouses increased when the crisis involved a spouse. The primary examples given were when one of the partners became ill, and the other partner was left with anxiety about the illness, the responsibility of coping with financial and family pressures, and lack of support from the other spouse.

Debora: He underwent a total and complete personality change: from a rather easy going, placid kind of person, he became very self-centered and very, very rigid is the only way I can put it. His attitude was that he was going to do what was best for him, and he didn't care if it pleased anybody else or not, including me...We fought. My whole life changed, and all the problems there were in the marriage started then.

Biological, Psychological and Social Themes

Biological Effects

Biological factors impacted female more than male participants. During the beginning years of marriage, four women identified the negative influence of physical factors, while none of the men identified any factor. During the child rearing years, six women identified a physical problem, while ten men did not identify anything. The other two men identified biological changes, but said they had no effect. The issues identified by both men and women included PMS, child related problems, menopause, spouse illnesses, vasectomies, and weight gain. During the post-child rearing years, there was a decrease in women's reports of biological changes.

Three couples identified PMS as something women experienced during the initial and child rearing years, and in one case, the post-child rearing years of marriage. Each of the couples said that it took some time for them to realize and understand the cause of the woman's change in moods. Once the understanding and cause was realized, the couple related more positively with each other.

> Arthur: There was a period when I didn't understand a woman and a woman's body and knowing about the time of her period that she could get a little bitchy. That used to tick her off.

> Hilary: Being married for so many years we've gotten used to - he knows when I get uptight. I suffered from PMS. I'm having a tough

time with menopause. I get really uptight. I've given him material to read, I've said to him "this is not good"...I think he would think that there was something wrong, and there wasn't. It was just PMS and I would say "leave me alone, I'll be fine." But he couldn't understand that. He thought he could make it better and you can't make it better, I needed to be left alone...After 26 years of marriage, he's realized that, finally. And I'm fine.

Two women discussed their feelings about their weight; their husbands commented on their wives' feelings about it as well. Both women struggled with being overweight at different points in their marriages. One man verbalized his preference for his wife to be thinner, while the other man focused on his wife's sensitivity about her weight.

Lillian: I have a tendency to gain weight...That was one thing that he was very serious about up until the third stage. He just didn't want me to be heavy because it didn't please him at all...all he had to say was, "are you putting on weight?"...I would worry about that because I knew it was very important to him.

Len: I would prefer her to be thinner. I would prefer her to be more beautiful. She talks about her wrinkles and wants a face life which she will probably do.

Emily: I've gained an awful lot of weight, because of my heart and I'm retaining fluids. I guess if you're talking about the sex life, it tapers off a bit, but it doesn't go away completely.

Three women experienced difficulty having children. One was told that there was little likelihood of her having children and two had traumatic miscarriages. In each case, the woman felt her husband was supportive.

Julia: I don't think that we would have had children bing bang boom if we didn't, I mean, I had one-eighth of one ovary before I conceived my first one, and that was diseased. I had a lot of problems and surgery prior to that from the time I was 17. I think it puts a strain on you, certainly.

James: We wanted children early on, which we had early on and we got rid of them while we were still young. The was the plus side of it. The negative side of it is that it's difficult when you have them that young and you're immediately tied to raising a family.

Three people identified menopause as negatively influencing either themselves and/or their relationship with their spouses, because of the women's fluctuating moods.

Ina: The past few years with menopause. Just the whole idea of the change and everything. It's come along pretty easily. I think I was a

little more sensitive as far as weepy...He doesn't ask a lot about things like that.

Hilary: I'm having a tough time with menopause. I get really uptight. I've given him material to read. I've said to him, "this is not good."

Four couples identified tension in their marriages resulting from spouse illnesses. These illnesses included infectious hepatitis, diabetes, and heart disease. As stated previously, tension between the spouses was more apparent and problematic for this type of crisis.

Gladys: The biggest crisis in our life, was when he had his heart attack and his surgery...It was another trauma...We managed to get through it - I think that the more things you overcome, the stronger the person you are.

Bernice: He had infectious hepatitis and I coped very well with two diapered children and a sick husband...I like pressure. I like stress because if I'm bored I get depressed...I had a sick husband to take care of. It was a challenge.

Psychological Effects

Six participants, including five women and one man were identified as having suffered from depression at one time in their marriages. The depression stemmed from a number of areas: miscarriages, post-partum

depression, separation from spouse due to war time, and career changes. Spouses most often responded with support concerning depression related to pregnancy issues. Alternatively, a lack of understanding was identified around issues of separation and career moves; in these instances, couples had less time for communication and the women often felt isolated as a result.

> Hilary: Psychologically, the major problem was the miscarriage and PMS and menopause. Hormone imbalance. When I have no control over how I react to things and he can't deal with that. Because I am a controlling person.

> Bernice: When the second child came, it was worse. I used to lie on the bed and cry. He didn't understand because he was forming his own business and he didn't get home until midnight. I was alone a lot out there and the town was very small and there was nobody for me to talk to and I was terribly homesick.

> Emily: I was so darn depressed that I wouldn't have cared, I think I just wanted to walk out and leave 'em all. My son always said "If you have to work at a marriage, it's not worth keeping." And I said, "Baloney, you don't know how many times down through the years I would have just walked out and shut the door on all of you."

One woman described her husband's poor self image. Four other individuals described the stresses of dealing with family of origin problems as

well as their extended families. In these cases, women were often drawn in to deal with family problems. The spousal relationship was not described as "suffering," but individuals felt acute stress and anxiety. Often, they felt no control or ability to change the problems.

> Kim: I really think his whole problem is he has a terrible self image and no self confidence and he's afraid to say something because he's afraid it's going to be the wrong thing or somebody's going to laugh at him. He's afraid to make a decision because he's afraid it's the wrong decision or somebody's going to laugh at him. I think that's why he's so uncommunicative. And that has had an impact on the marriage.

> Julia: I went through a lot...I think I always hoped that my sister might come back into the picture because I never knew why she really stopped talking to me. And when my dad became really ill about six years ago, I thought, for sure now she'll come back and no...My husband said, "I hate to see you so bitter. Give it up. Face it."

Five people revealed that they had received short term therapy during one phase of their marriages. All but one of these people were women: one couple said they went to family counseling when their daughter asked them to. The husband was quite reluctant. The remaining three women received therapy for depression and/or anxiety despite their husbands' opposition in each case. Husbands were opposed to therapy because they "didn't believe in

it," and women reported that many spousal disagreements ensued because of it.

> Debora: The retirement has affected it (the marriage) tremendously. In fact, we're trying to get some help because there have been certain situations where his insensitivity to my feelings has been flagrant. And I don't really know how to cope with the anger I feel about that...I've gone by myself, but he's gone a few times. And, after one session where she pointed out to him - he has no understanding of how a woman thinks at all. But then again, a lot of men don't...Coming from the counselor, is very helpful. It hasn't solved everything, but it's helpful.

> Kim: He was not there for me. Emotionally, definitely that's a problem. It interferes with our marriage because I'm very emotional and I'm very moody...Right now I'm receiving counseling and he thinks it's a terrible idea...He does not believe in psychologists or in therapy and my opinion is it's because he knows he needs it and doesn't want to even think about it.

Social Effects

The majority of the participants did not identify any social influences on the marriage. Themes which did emerge included World War II, the economy, and in one case, a couple had to deal with their daughter joining a cult.

Two couples were married during the war. In both cases, the women joined their husbands. One woman's experience was positive, while the other woman had a terrible time.

Gladys: It was World War II. He was in the service when we got married...It was a very, very dramatic time...when we got married, I joined him. That's where we started out our life together...A lot of people thought I was crazy to get married and not know where I was going and what I was going to be doing. But it didn't phase me. We had a great time.

Emily: Two weeks (after the marriage) I followed...For a year and a half, I went from one camp to another...I was the waiting wife. I cried a lot...I was so lonesome because when they're at OCS, they can't get off, and I occasionally saw him on a weekend.

The economy negatively impacted three couples who experienced job loss. In each case, the wife went to work to help out with the family's finances. The spouses tended to pull together during these times rather than letting the tension come between them.

Ina: It (the business) had to be closed with the economy and everything. We could see it was coming. It wasn't a shock. We knew for about 6 months that it wasn't going to be able to last any longer. And that was too bad, because that was his dream.

Kim: During the first 12 years of our marriage, he was out of work a lot. He didn't have any money. It was during the engineering crisis when there was a shortage of engineering jobs and a glut of engineers. So he kept losing his jobs. So that was bad. There was one time where I had to go to work because he didn't have any. And it was a job I absolutely hated...The economy definitely affected our marriage, but as bad as it was, I don't see that it affected it negatively.

James: It's a terrible stress going through loss of career because I was in my early 50s and I didn't know what I was going to do and I was not trained to do anything else, and it looked like the end of the road as far as income, career and all that, and I loved what I was doing...I was very stressed out...Julia was very supportive. We talked through the whole thing. "What are we going to do? Where are we going to live? What are we going to do for an income?" And she's just always been very supportive.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Introduction

This chapter presents salient trends emerging from identified themes, examines significant findings, and relates them to the current research. The primary purpose of this study was to identify marital themes that play a significant role in the stability of long-married Jewish couples. Fourteen themes emerged from the interview data gathered from 12 couples. Of these, premarital themes included initial attraction, certainty about spouse, family support, and expectations about marriage. Relationship themes were communication, roles, relatedness, and stability. Critical external factors influencing the marriage included the extended family, finances, culture, and religion. Lastly, the effect of transitions, crises, and biological, psychological, and social factors added meaningful information in the assessment of marital stability. These themes were presented in Chapter Four. From these themes, four additional findings were identified: satisfaction, gender differences, complementarity, and curvilinearity. The chapter concludes with an assessment of directions of further research.

Premarital Themes: Initial Attraction and Influence of Family

Initial Attraction

The present study revealed several factors which influenced initial attraction. Twenty of the 24 individuals said they felt positively about their

future spouses after their initial meetings. Thirteen of these individuals cited physical attraction as the most influential factor. This finding supports that of Walster (1966): physical attraction is the major determinant of initial attraction, especially for males. Nine individuals indicated that personality was important and three others found their future spouses' senses of humor attractive.

Lauer, et al. (1990) emphasize the importance of an extended dating process to successful, stable marriages. The majority of the couples (N=7) in the present study however, were married a year or less after their initial meeting. Most couples became engaged within six months of the initial meeting. The couple who dated the longest, five years, only did so because the husband's mother forbade them to be married before the husband graduated from college.

Hollingshead (1950) and Nichols (1978) have studied factors important in mate selection, principally homogamy factors including race, religion, and education. The criteria for inclusion in the present study included each of these factors, among other variables. In selecting research couples, the researcher asked each individual about the importance of these variables when searching for a mate. Religion was found to be the most important common factor that couples mentioned in their selection of future spouses. They added that the importance of marrying someone of the same religion was a factor they learned from their parents. Therefore, it seems that these factors, or their absence, play a significant role in initial attraction, as each person automatically ruled out any potential mate who did not meet the initial criteria.

Influence of Family

    Eighteen individuals (7 men, 11 women) in the present study felt supported by their parents in their choice of spouse. Eleven of these 18 emphasized the importance of their mother's approval. Women had an easier time receiving approval from their parents. Six individuals (5 men, 1 woman) said their parents clearly disapproved of their intended spouses. Four of these individuals felt their parents were not supportive because of their mother's resistance to letting them go and/or because they had jealous mothers. Each of the four individuals was a man. While each man followed through on his decision to marry, he received less support from his family of origin throughout his marriage.

    Adams (1979) studied the negative reaction of significant others to spouse choice and found that its effect on the marriage is unclear. Importantly, negative parental reaction can serve to strengthen, or diminish the relationship. Couples in the present study who continued to have difficulty with their husbands' parents did not appear to have difficulty with their own relationship as a result of this negative response. In fact, individuals in this situation often described the unity and strength that emerged as a function of addressing their parents' issues, concerns and biases. Though some individuals described their families as negatively influencing their marriages, those problems were related to the family of origin, rather than to disagreements between the spouses concerning the extended families.

    The present study found that women were closer to their families of origin throughout their marriages than were men, reporting a qualitatively and quantitatively greater amount of inter-family contact. This supports the

earlier findings of Kotler and Omodei (1988) and Wamboldt and Reiss (1989). In addition, husbands experienced their wives' families as more emotionally supportive than were their own families of origin. Women's families have closer continuing contact with the couple and women are more emotionally involved with their families of origin than are men (Zube, 1982). This is consistent with the reported gender differences in emphasis on relationships (Hagestad, 1984). Women in the present study also had primary responsibility for arranging the couples' social activities. Because women are more relationally-oriented and are more emotionally connected than men (Surrey, 1984), this study supported the hypothesis that they would be closer to their own families of origin rather than to their husbands' families because they get the emotional support they desire.

Satisfaction

A significant, positive relationship between marital quality and marital stability has been documented in the literature (Kelly & Conley, 1987; Lewis & Spanier, 1979). Thus, the present study assessed themes which were related directly to marital quality. Marital quality is associated with good communication, happiness, and satisfaction with the relationship (Hicks & Platt, 1970; Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Roberts, 1979). In this study, communication improved over the years, while happiness and satisfaction dipped during the child rearing years and then improved in the years after the children left home.

In their research, Lauer, Lauer, and Kerr (1990) found that the most important factor related to marital happiness and marital success was the

spouses' involvement in an intimate relationship with someone they liked and whose company they enjoyed. Themes from the present study support these findings. Couples emphasized the friendships they had with their spouses, and eight individuals added that they considered their spouses to be their best friends. Other factors important in this relationship included a sense of humor and personality.

O'Leary and Turkewitz (1981) found a positive relationship between satisfaction, and love and positive feelings. Love is described as the most important affective component in a successful marriage (Broderick, 1981; Broderick & O'Leary, 1986). Couples in the present study described the love they had for their spouses and said this basic value came from observing their own parents' marriages.

Lewis and Spanier (1979) put forth three propositions regarding the relationship of significant variables to marital quality, each of which are supported in the present study. These variables include adequate role models, involvement in the community and high socioeconomic status, and positive feedback from the interaction between the spouses.

While the individuals in the present study felt mixed about the similarities of their marriages to their own parents' marriages, many of the differences they described concerned external factors, namely financial circumstances and the hardship many of their parents experienced. However, in all but four cases, individuals described their parents as positive role models: they learned the basic values of love, respect, and commitment from their parents. Parental premarital homogamy in age, education, and religion served as an additional defining characteristic for the individuals; each

individual desired these attributes in his or her own marriage. Researchers have described the positive correlation between homogamy factors within the couple and marital stability (Hicks & Platt, 1970; Levinger, 1965; Lewis & Spanier, 1979).

The second proposition, involvement in the community, was important for couples in the present study, and was particularly pronounced when their children were growing up. Much of this involvement occurred through affiliation with the temple and Jewish organizations. The women were primarily responsible for arranging social and religious activities and spent time volunteering in community organizations. In many cases, the couples' upper-middle class status allowed the women the time to pursue involvement in community activities because they did not have to work.

The third proposition Lewis and Spanier (1979) discuss concerns the relationship of positive interaction between the spouses and marital quality. While all individuals in this study described a range of feelings and interactions they had with their spouses, ten of the 12 couples described their relationships as primarily positive. They described the emotional gratification and support they received from their spouses as well as their sense of comfort.

The present study found 11 of the 12 couples to be relatively satisfied with their marriages. The one couple who reported dissatisfaction realized their discontent after the husband retired from his job; each spouse reported leading separate lives until this time, and was experiencing significant difficulty in adapting to the changes of having the husband at home. Cuber and Harroff (1963) found that unhappy couples can stay together for a number

of reasons. Levinger (1965) identified "bars" to stability that, despite marital dissatisfaction, keep the couple together. "Bars" include social and psychological influences that keep the marriage intact (Nye, White, & Frieders, 1969). The woman in this study reported that her primary reason for remaining with her husband was because she did not have the self-confidence to leave him despite her marital dissatisfaction. She was concerned that she would not be able to support herself financially. This type of concern is supported in Lederer and Jackson's (1968) research on the social and psychological forces which work against separation and divorce; they found that economics played a significant role in keeping dissatisfied couples together.

Gender Differences

A number of researchers provide theoretical support for gender differences which are biologically and/or environmentally based (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Lewis, 1988a; Surrey, 1984). They describe gender identification and gender roles as observable from an early age. Gilligan (1982) states that men and women begin with distinct biological points of origin, follow different paths through childhood, and reach adulthood with different role behaviors, personality traits, gender identities, and attitudes.

Chodorow (1978) relates gender identification and roles to the individual's earliest identification with the mother. She states that the mother identifies less with the son and pushes him toward differentiation and toward adopting a male role based on identification with the father. The boy represses his relational ego and builds an autonomous ego. Thus, boys'

nurturant capacities are repressed, preparing them for a less active affective family role (Chodorow, 1978). Alternatively, girls develop a relational ego through identification with their mothers. They experience themselves as less separate and have more permeable ego boundaries than do boys. The specific gender role of mothering stems from the caretaker/child cycle from which girls emerge with a capacity for empathy and relationships built into their self-definition in a way that boys do not (Chodorow, 1978).

The present study supports these differences in gender roles and identification. Differences were observed in the individuals' styles of communication and decision making, and in manners of self expression. Although there was some variability, women in the present study were more likely to communicate and to address problems than were men. Eleven of the 12 men avoided conflict in the beginning of the marriage and throughout the child rearing years. During the years after the children left home, there was a slight shift toward confrontation, when three of the 11 men were more likely to confront conflict. However, nine husbands continued to avoid confronting problems with their wives. For the women, there was an initial even split between the tendency to avoid or confront problems with their husbands. This split shifted toward more confrontation throughout the marriage: in the years after the children left home, nine women reported confronting their differences with their husbands.

Much of the literature supports the above findings that women are more likely than men to communicate and to confront relationship problems (Huston & Ashmore, 1986; Lewis, 1988a; Wamboldt & Reiss, 1989). Schlesinger and Mullaly (1984) found that Jewish women were more likely to

confront problems than their husbands, although in their comparison of Jews and nonJews, they indicate that Jewish couples emphasize the need to share negative feelings and emotions.

Lewis' findings (1988a) support the views of Chodorow (1978): women are more assertive than men in their communication styles, are more likely to address problems, and are more relational in their styles of interaction. Alternatively, men avoid conflict and are perceived as more autonomous. Wamboldt and Reiss (1989) regard women as "relationship specialists" who persist in their attempts to resolve relationship conflicts whereas men are more likely to withdraw.

Self-in-relation theory (Surrey, 1984, 1985, 1987) contrasts the separation-individuation model with that of "relationship-differentiation". The model accounts for the centrality of relationships in the lives of women, and frames their connectedness with others in a positive, growth-enhancing manner. The "relational self" is the core self-structure in women, with the emphasis on connection and movement towards others, rather than disconnection (Surrey, 1984).

Levenson and Gottman (1983) offer a biological explanation for the gender differences in interactive styles. In their study of marital interaction, they found that men have more difficulty regulating their arousal during marital conflict than do women. In addition, following the confrontation, men take longer to return to their normal level of functioning. Thus, men find confrontation to be more emotionally stressful than women and, as a consequence, avoid it.

Gottman and Krokoff (1989) emphasize the need to confront conflicts as a way to resolve marital disagreements. In the present study, eight individuals supported this statement: they added that compromise and tolerance were key factors in maintaining the stability in their marriages.

The slight shift over time toward increased confrontative behaviors for both sexes in the present study parallels the shift observed in improved communication during their married lives. The most marked shift toward improved communication occurred after the children left home. While no gender differences were evident in the perception of communication within the marital relationship, there were differences in the styles of relating. While there was some variability in the sample, the majority of the women (N=8) were characterized as expressive in their marital behavior. Alternatively, most of the men (N=10) were viewed as instrumental in their behavior. Several of the women verbalized the wish that their husbands would be more emotionally and verbally expressive. These findings support those of Stinnett, Carter, and Montgomery (1972) who found that women complain most about their husbands' lack of communication and expression.

The finding that men are predominantly instrumental in their behaviors while women are more expressive parallels the gender differences found in decision making styles. Men were primarily logical in their thinking (N=11), while women had more intuitive styles (N=7). It is interesting to note that while some women were described as logical in their decision making (N=5), no men were perceived as having primarily intuitive styles. Women in the present study relied on their intuitive styles to make decisions about marrying their spouses: five women and only one man said

they relied on their feelings about the person to make the decision. Adams (1979) found that couples often decide to marry due to conscious or unconscious feelings about the future spouse.

Several researchers have found that women influence marital stability more than men (Bentler & Newcomb, 1978; Zube, 1982). Because they are more interpersonally oriented than men, women tend to be perceived as more responsible for the marital relationship and its outcome. Although the women in the present study were not identified specifically as responsible for the relationship, women were more confrontative, and in many instances said they had learned how to raise issues with their husbands in order to steer the relationship in the direction they wanted.

Complementarity: Interpersonal Fit with Spouse

Complementarity was evident in the present study in several respects. The spouses' manners of interaction, feelings, and roles were often opposite from each other. Much of the complementarity in this study was gender-specific: certain behaviors and feelings were associated predominantly with men in the sample and other behaviors and feelings were associated with women along with much connection and relatedness between the spouses. Twenty-three of the 24 individuals were found to have complementary relationships with their spouses in the beginning and child rearing years. Twenty-one of 24 complementary relationships continued into the years after the children left home.

Each of the 12 couples in the present study had traditional roles, which were by nature complementary. The men worked and provided for the

family. While six of the women in the sample worked, none was the primary breadwinner for the family. The woman's primary role was to care for the home and the children. Cowan et al. (1985) found increasing differences between spouses when they first became parents. Men focused more on work, and women increased their time at home. All but one woman in the present study stopped working outside of the home when the children were born.

Ten couples reported handling child rearing responsibilities separately. However, five of these couples emphasized the support they received from their spouses concerning decisions made about the children. This is in contrast to Cowan et al.'s (1985) finding that women experienced their husbands as withdrawing from the family after the children were born. Nadelson, Polonsky, and Mathews (1984) added that husbands may resent the family's demands and may react by avoiding the family and/or withdrawing into work. Individuals did report that several husbands' career responsibilities were more demanding during the child rearing years, which kept them away from the home for longer hours. However, this was not experienced by the wives as avoidance or withdrawal. In fact, the spouses in the sample often commented that they felt they were working with their spouses as a team, toward the shared goal of providing for the family.

Specific areas of decision making reinforced that of the traditional roles. Decisions made about the home and children were the women's responsibility; decisions about work and finances were the men's responsibility. In the early and child rearing years of marriage, four females perceived their husbands as the primary decision makers for their families,

while six individuals regarded the women as making most of the decisions. There was a marked shift away from individual decision making to more mutual decision making styles in the years after the children left home. It is notable that these later years were accompanied by less clearly defined roles: the women no longer needed to care for the children and the men's careers were less demanding.

Complementarity was also present in the spouses' emotional responses to each other. Many individuals spoke of their spouses as providing the necessary "balance" for a positive, stable relationship. Bakan's (1966) notion of agency and communion illustrate this balance: men were more agentic and instrumental and women more communal and expressive (Parsons & Bales, 1955). Gilligan (1982) also supports these differences in her work on gender difference theory. Boys tend to experience themselves as separate, and may be threatened by compromises to their independence. Alternatively, girls tend to experience themselves as part of a network of relationships and avoid disruptions in their sense of connectedness. It follows then that boys must learn to connect and girls to separate, with the goal of enabling both sexes to move in both agentic and communal worlds (Gilligan, 1982).

The men in the present study became more understanding and sensitive as the marriage progressed, a finding which supports men's ability to become more expressive and nurturing over time (Neugarten, 1979). While women in the study maintained a high degree of sensitivity and understanding throughout the marriage, they also juggled the responsibilities of home, children, and social activities which made it imperative that they develop their agentic skills. Although there was a positive shift in the

husbands' sensitivity and understanding, 21 individuals reported feeling mutually respected and trusted by their spouses throughout their marriages. These variables have been perceived as crucial to maintaining marital stability (Burgess & Locke, 1945). Other researchers have identified a strong correlation between positive regard and marital satisfaction (Barnes, Schumm, Jurich, & Bollman, 1984; Lewis & Spanier, 1979).

Many researchers have correlated egalitarian relationships with marital satisfaction (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Gray-Little & Burks, 1983). Kelley (1979) noted that stable marriages are constantly moving toward a balance of power. Others argue that it is the perception of equality in the relationship which is most important (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983). Despite the complementary nature of their relationships, 18 individuals in the present study felt they had a spousal relationship based predominantly on sharing and reciprocity. Three women reported feeling that their relationships were unfair during the child rearing years because of their sudden increased responsibilities and two men added that their wives gave more to the relationship than they did. Thus, wives were viewed as "givers" while the husbands were regarded as "takers." Although seemingly unfair to the women, the lack of balance in these relationships was acknowledged and accepted by each partner. What is significant in this discussion is the couples' acceptance and comfortability with the balance or imbalance of power in the relationship, and not necessarily which spouse has more power.

Curvilinearity

The concept of curvilinearity refers to the relationship between the

family life cycle and marital adjustment (Gurin, Veroff, & Feld, 1960; Hicks & Platt, 1970; Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Moore, 1980; Orden & Bradburn, 1969; Spanier, Lewis, & Cole, 1975). When the couple is first married, reported marital quality is generally high. When the children are born, quality decreases, and increases only when the children leave home. Although not all of the couples in the present study can be described as having a curvilinear relationship regarding their marital adjustment and family life cycle, four variables clearly follow this pattern: relatedness, psychosocial and physical intimacy, and satisfaction.

Decrease in Marital Quality during Child Rearing Years

The child rearing years present developmental challenges for couples. There is a change in roles and in the interpersonal relationship, a decline in quality, and a decrease in romance (Belsky, Spanier, & Rovine, 1983; Lewis, 1988). Abernathy (1976) and Rollins and Feldman (1970) found a negative relationship between the child rearing years and three factors: marital affection, satisfaction, and intimacy. Clearly, the roles of parent and spouse are often in conflict, and spouses can have difficulty adjusting, communicating, resolving their conflicts, and understanding each other (Grunebaum & Christ, 1976).

Although Cowan et al. (1985) report a decline in role satisfaction for both spouses, they found this decline to be associated more with the men than the women. In contrast, the present study found that women became less satisfied during the child rearing years than did men. In addition, perception of intimacy in the relationship decreased more for women than

for men. Like other studies, each individual stated that the man's life did not change as much as the woman's during the child rearing years; thus, women may have felt and acknowledged, more changes in the relationship (Belsky, Spanier, & Rovine, 1983; Feldman & Nash, 1984). Feldman and Nash (1984) found that women experience more positive and negative changes in the transition to parenthood than men. Women experience an increase in positive mood and satisfaction with their roles as primary caretakers, while also experiencing less autonomy and competence (Feldman & Nash, 1984). Miller and Sollie (1980) add that there is an increase in marital stress for mothers when compared with fathers. The woman often feels overburdened (Bernard, 1974). Women can also experience lowered self-esteem and loss of career direction when rearing their children as they spend more time at home, and often give up their jobs (Rossi, 1968).

As previously mentioned, seven individuals in the present study reported a decline in their overall feelings of relatedness with their spouses during the child rearing years. These individuals identified child rearing and career pressures as important factors in this decline. Other reasons for the occurrence of this decline include the amount of time, energy, and effort required to adequately rear children, and less time for marital intimacy (Cowan, et al., 1985; Glenn & Weaver, 1981).

Increase in Marital Quality during the Post-Child Rearing Years

Relatedness between spouses is lower during the children's adolescence (Rollins & Feldman, 1970). At the same time, couples often experience anxiety concerning the children's anticipated leaving (Bumagin &

Hirn, 1982). Four couples in the present study voiced their anxiety related to expectations of their married life without the children at home. The anticipated increase in time available to spend together after many years of family life often produces uncertainty (Bumagin & Hirn, 1982).

Once the children left, however, 11 of the 12 couples felt positively about this life-style change and about their marital relationship. There was also an increase in intimacy, sense of relatedness and satisfaction with the relationship. Many couples regard these years as the best times of their married lives similar to Lowenthal and Haven (1968), Moore (1980) and Nadelson, et al. (1984). These years are often associated with increased satisfaction and support, a greater amount of sharing and empathy, and increased opportunity for spontaneity (Nadelson, et al., 1984).

Many couples report a qualitative difference in their sexual relationships as they become older (Roberts, 1979). Physical touching often replaces intercourse and couples report feeling closer to each other. Many of the couples in the present study, as well as that of Roberts (1979), said they continued to have a sexually active relationship in their later years. They described the increased opportunities for spontaneity after the children had left home, the increased feelings of emotional connectedness, and the decreased stress in career and child rearing responsibilities that accompanies the later years. Each of these factors was perceived as influential in the maintenance of a positive sexual relationship.

Developmental Processes: Transitions and Crises

The current study considered the developmental stages through which couples progress, and sought to incorporate these stages into the themes. Marital adjustment is a process rather than a state (Spanier, 1976). The processes of both stability and change must be evaluated when assessing marital shifts and developmental periods (Cowan, et al., 1985; Lewis, 1988). Podbelski (1992) emphasizes the utility of a developmental perspective in assessing significant themes in stable marriages.

Couples move through developmental shifts and need to adapt to these changes. These shifts create a potential for progress and growth. "If complementary shifts do not occur in both partners, the homeostatic balance of the relationship may be disturbed" (Nadelson, et al., 1984, p. 127). These researchers assert that couples progress through developmental stages in a manner similar to individuals. They list six marital phases: (1) idealization; (2) disappointment, disillusionment, and disenchantment; (3) productivity and parenting; (4) career resolution; (5) redefinition and child launching; and (6) reintegration and postparenting (Nadelson, et al., 1984, p. 131).

Idealization and unrealistic expectations are often present during the early stages of marriage (Gurman, 1978). The spouse can distort the traits and qualities of the other and view him/her as they wish the person to be (Nichols, 1978). In the present study, couples spoke about this phase as occurring during the engagement and early years of marriage. However, they also described their initial adjustments to married life; in general, women had more adaptations to make. They had new caretaking roles, were often living away from their parents for the first time, and were learning to care for their own homes. Men, alternatively, described having few adjustments to

make: they continued to work as they had prior to marriage and had few domestic responsibilities. Two men indicated that marriage was like having another roommate. Men were more likely to experience the early years of marriage as ideal and requiring minor adaptations, while women experienced more challenges and new life circumstances to which to adapt.

Career changes by husbands were transitional, stressful times for the couples, but especially for the women. Four couples moved at least once. While the husbands readily adapted to their new positions, the women were left with the responsibilities of coordinating the moves from one house to another, and of re-establishing themselves and their families in their communities. Nadelson, et al. (1984) suggest that career changes which result in relocation can cause stress for the spouse who does not get as much from the move. The women in the present study had established themselves and their children in their communities; although they were supportive of their husbands' career decisions, the wives' descriptions of the moves often revealed the resentment they felt toward their husbands for having to move. However, this resentment was commonly diminished in the face of the family values each couple emphasized. It was important to perceive the moves as beneficial for the family unit even though they may have caused uprooting from well-established school, community, and family relationships.

The transition to the post-child rearing years has been discussed in its relationship to curvilinearity, i.e. certain elements of the marriage were found to improve after the children left home. This transition may be one of the most stressful periods of marriage (Nadelson, et al., 1984). The evolving

needs of both children and spouses create the need to adapt to a different life without the family. The woman is left to redefine her role now that primary caretaking responsibilities have ended, a period that can be both frightening and exciting (Siegel, 1982).

Zube (1982) states that while there can be an increased amount of sharing and involvement with the spouse in the later years of marriage, some couples grow further apart, especially if the focus of the marriage has been the children. In addition, the couple's experience of retirement can also be positive or negative depending on the quality of the marital relationship (Moore, 1980). The increased amount of time couples have for each other can be viewed as a benefit or as problematic. One couple, previously described, had difficulty getting along with each other following the husband's retirement. The wife perceived the husband as interfering in her domain, and as increasing her responsibilities while decreasing his own. The perceived power and demands in this relationship became unbalanced and unacceptable, especially to the woman. In addition, the lack of communication that had always existed became more pronounced when the husband retired and further exacerbated the difficulties. Four couples in the present study experienced a positive transition when the husbands retired. They enjoyed the increased time together and opportunity for spontaneity now that the husbands had no work demands.

Crises also create the need for adaptation. Despite experiencing a number of crises, couples in the present study reported a minimal level of conflict. Couples emphasized their mutual support for their spouses in the midst of crises as well as the importance of communication. These couples'

relatively high degrees of satisfaction throughout their marriages supports Birchler and Webb's (1977) finding that happy couples have fewer conflicts.

Adolescence creates great potential for the occurrence of crises, as teenagers struggle for their independence and rebel against their parents' values. In the present study, three individuals said they had difficulty with their adolescent children, and an additional six individuals said their children were difficult but manageable. Not surprisingly, the most problematic times were experienced during the 1960s. This finding supports the need to take into account the influence of social factors when assessing marital stability.

Couples described a number of crises involving their children, their spouses, their extended families, and their employment. Although three couples in the present study experienced job loss at least once in their married lives, none of the couples viewed themselves as having any financial crises. In all three cases, the women went to work outside of the home to help support the family while the husband looked for a new job. There was an implicit agreement that the woman would financially support the family, while the man re-established himself in the business world. These instances expand the definition of the women's role as family caretaker. The majority of the conflict between spouses resulted from spouse illness. Spouses had less difficulty interacting when the problem was outside of the relationship. They could feel united in addressing the problem and could receive support from each other.

Religion and Culture

The present study involved only Jewish couples. Judaism places a high priority on marriage as an intrinsic value (Waxman, 1982). Comparisons of Jewish couples and couples of other religions revealed that the Jewish divorce rate is significantly lower than the other groups (Goldberg, 1968; Phillips, 1980). Goldberg (1968) states, "separation and divorce are less prevalent among Jews than among the general white population" (p. 8). This lends further importance to the identification of marital themes significant to the Jewish population.

The relationship of the Jewish religion and familistic values has been well documented (Waxman, 1982). Waxman (1982) states that the Jewish family is unique with respect to the maintenance of strong kinship ties. He states, "the main structural component of Jewish communal life is the two-parent family, and there is a dialectical relationship between the structure and the religious-cultural value of the centrality of that family form" (Waxman, 1982, p. 168). All but one of the couples interviewed in the present study specifically emphasized the importance of familistic values in relation to Judaism. They reported that cultural activities and the celebration of the Jewish holidays were a means of fostering family togetherness. In discussing the similarities they felt they had with their own parents, these couples emphasized that they learned the importance of family and culture from their parents.

Formalized religion became increasingly important to all but one couple as the children became age-appropriate to attend Hebrew School. Temple affiliation and religious activities were paramount until the children were Bar Mitzvah. Following the Bar Mitzvah, temple affiliation and

attendance decreased dramatically, a finding common to many religions (Waxman, 1982). The majority of couples in the present study emphasized the importance of providing their children with a formal religious education rather than attending services for their own religious fulfillment.

Schlesinger and Mullaly (1984) identified seven marital themes important to the Jewish population: recognizing the needs of the individual within the marriage, similar ethnic and religious background, common interests and activities, freedom from financial worries, intimacy, loving each other, and sexual satisfaction. The present study provides support for each of these themes in respect to the influence of religion and culture on the relationships among Jewish couples.

Biological, Psychological, and Social Influences

Adult developmental stages occur in the context of the interaction of psychological, sociocultural, and biological factors (Moore, 1980). Each factor constantly adjusts as changes take place in other factors. Couples in the present study identified the impact of these influences and their associated changes in their married lives.

Not surprisingly, biological influences in the present study affected women more than men, e.g. miscarriages, menopause, etc. What is interesting is the manner in which couples dealt with these occurrences. Initially, neither spouse felt that the husband had an appreciation for the biological changes occurring in the woman. Over time, however, men seemed to gain an understanding of these changes resulting in less stress

between the spouses. This increase in understanding nurtured improvement in communication over the years.

The primary psychological influence identified by six individuals (five women and one man) was the occurrence of depression during at least one point in the marriage. Gender differences in the occurrence of depression has been documented in the literature: women have higher rates of depression than men (Jack, 1991; Weissman and Klerman, 1977). A number of reasons for this finding include genetics, women's social status, the experience of more severe life events, and endocrinology, e.g. pre-menstrual syndrome and post-partum depression (Weissman and Klerman, 1977). More recently, Jack (1991) has emphasized the central importance of intimate relationships in women's lives. Women are often caught in a bind which involves sacrificing their own needs in order to maintain relationships vs. expressing their own needs and thus, jeopardizing their relationships (Jack, 1991). Due to the centrality of relationships, Jack (1991) purports that women sacrifice their own needs, devalue and silence themselves, and repress their anger, responses which tend to result in depression. Four of the women in the present study received short term therapy to alleviate their depression.

While social factors existed, they did not appear to cause any long-lasting problems for the couples though, at the time, they were stressful. Two couples were married during the war with the government determining when they could see each other and where they would live. One of the women became pregnant and returned to live with her family of origin, seeing her husband only twice during the first two years after their child was born. The other major social influence was a depressed economy which

affected three couples when the husbands lost their jobs. Each couple described those years as stressful, but denied any problems with their marital relationships due to the husbands' unemployment.

Concluding Remarks

There is a variety of responses and behaviors within each theme identified in the marriages of these 12 couples. Developmental theorists state that there is no one pattern which is healthy; instead, there exists individuality and uniqueness within and between couples (Sroufe, 1989). Sroufe (1989) offers a means for understanding these different patterns and behaviors. His model addresses possibilities of change, differentiation in adaptation and deviation within a normal range. Individuals may begin on the same pathways, but make unique choices which lead to different patterns of adaptation. Thus, there exists what may be called a family of patterns for individuals, all of which fall within the normal range. Sroufe (1989) states, "the focus then becomes one of defining, tracing, and understanding normal pathways of development, specifying significant deviations from these normal pathways...and uncovering the factors that deflect and return individuals to any given pathway" (p. 13). It is this author's hope that one could adopt a similar model in the study of couples and the themes significant to maintaining marital stability. There is clearly a wide range of behaviors within and between spouses. What appears important is the identification of themes common to similar types of groups or couples, while maintaining an appreciation for individuality and differences within groups.

Clearly, there is value in understanding the dynamics of marital quality and stability and their relevance to not only the incremental development of psychological theory, but equally to the evolution of therapeutic orientation and methods in working with married couples. Finally, the marital changes over time need to be evaluated in the context of biological, psychological, and sociocultural shifts occurring within and between individuals.

Areas of Further Study

The findings in the present study provoke new ideas and questions for future research. Several researchers have investigated marital themes common to a variety of groups (Demment, 1991; Podbelski, 1992). The identification and isolation of these themes or patterns of experience may well provide the requisite underpinnings for the next generation of quantitative studies of these phenomena.

The couples in the present study had conventional, gender enculturated roles: the women cared for the children and household, and the men worked and provided full financial support for the family. With the increasing number of dual-career families and the changing roles of women, a study of marital themes common to the dual-career population would be pertinent for many couples in the 1990s (Bjorksten & Stewart, 1984). Competition can become a primary source of conflict for these couples who are trying to do it all (Nadelson, et al., 1984). An assessment of how couples effectively integrate family and career would be useful. An inter-study analysis of Jewish dual-income families would be particularly revealing in

that it would further isolate those themes intrinsic to marriage and intrinsic to culture.

Goldstein and Goldscheider (1968) found a higher divorce rate among Jews born in the United States than among Jews born elsewhere. It would be equally revealing to evaluate the social, cultural, and religious differences found in these two samples. Goldstein and Goldscheider (1968) also found a higher divorce rate among Reform Jews than among either Conservative or Orthodox Jews. Brodbar-Nemzer (1986a) adds that Jews who have a greater group commitment on a variety of variables are consistently less likely to divorce; religion as the basis for group commitment had the largest impact. A comparison of Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative couples on marital themes may reveal further marital differences amongst these affiliations. It may also be that Reform Jews are among the most culturally assimilated, and thus their divorce rates would naturally tend more towards the norm.

Although no systematic effort was made to assess the effect, if any, and experience of the interviews in this study themselves, the researcher had opportunities to speak with a number of the interviewees several days after the interviews. Contact was usually made by the researcher to follow up on potential leads for other subjects. In three cases, the researcher learned of beneficial effects of the interview. One woman said that her husband reported being "enlightened" following the interview, and another said that the couple had begun communicating more positively with each other. A third woman reported that she and her husband had discussed their responses to the interview questions at length. The following week, her husband sent her flowers, something he had not done in years, and

something she had said she missed. Thus, there was a general sense that some of the couples felt closer and more connected with each other following the interviews. The impact of the interviews is an area of further study and may suggest the importance of periodic psychosocial "check-ups" of marriages parallel to physical examinations for the healthy body.

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Appendix A: Letter to Potential Referral Sources

DATE

Dear (Potential Referral Source),

As you know, I am a doctoral candidate in the Counseling Psychology Program at Boston College and am currently working on my dissertation. I am in search of participants for my project which concerns how couples think and feel about their marriage. I am hoping to identify themes which have assisted couples married at least 20 years to stay together.

I am writing to ask if you know of any couples who might be interested in volunteering their time to be interviewed by me about their personal ideas, feelings, and life experiences concerning their marriage. Specifically, I am hoping to interview couples who meet the following criteria:

1. both are Jewish, (non-Orthodox) and born in the U.S.
2. married at least 20 years
3. youngest child is at least 18 years old
4. husband has a college degree, but no education beyond college
5. wife has no degree beyond college; she does not need to have a
       college degree
6. neither spouse has had extensive psychotherapy

Each spouse will be interviewed separately. Each interview will be tape recorded and will last approximately 1 1/2 to 2 hours. The couple's identity will be kept confidential and will not be revealed in any reports generated by this study. I would be more than willing to interview them in their home or to meet at an agreed upon place. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have about various aspects of the study or the type of couples I am looking for. I will be calling you in the next week to see if you know of any couple(s) who might be willing to participate in this study. If you would like to call me before this time, I can be reached at (telephone number). Thanks in advance for your time, interest, and help. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,

Laura Kanter, M.A.

Appendix B: Letter to Potential Subjects

DATE

Dear (Potential Couple),

I am a doctoral candidate in the Counseling Psychology Program at Boston College. (Referral Source) gave me your names as potential participants for my research which concerns how couples experience changes in marriage over time and how they adapt to these changes. Specifically, I am interviewing Jewish couples married at least 20 years, whose youngest child is at least 18 years old. I am interviewing couples in which the husband has a college degree and the wife has no more than a college degree. The purpose of the interview is to share your personal ideas, feelings, and life experiences concerning your marriage. I am hoping to identify themes which have assisted couples married a long time to stay together.

What would participation in this project involve on your part? Before beginning the interview, you and your spouse would read and sign an informed consent form which explains the project and its goals. I have attached a copy of this form. Each spouse is interviewed separately. Each interview is tape recorded and lasts between 1 1/2 and 2 hours. You may choose not to respond to any particular questions and you are free to terminate the interview at any point. Your identity will be kept confidential and will not be revealed in any reports generated by this study.

I would be more than willing to interview you in your home or to meet at an agreed upon place and would be pleased to answer any questions you may have about various aspects of the study. (Referral Source) has given me your telephone number. I will be calling you in the beginning of next week to determine your interest in participating in this study. If you should wish to call me before this time, I can be reached at (telephone number). Thank you in advance for your time and interest. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,

Laura Kanter, M.A.

enclosure

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

I understand that the interview sessions with Laura Kanter are part of the research for her doctoral dissertation under the direction of Dr. Bernard O'Brien of Boston College. The purpose of the research project is to better understand how some couples married a minimum of twenty years, negotiate their marriages. The purpose of the interview(s) is to share my personal ideas, feelings, and life experiences concerning my marriage.

I understand that the interview will be tape recorded. I realize that I may choose not to respond to any particular questions, that I may stop the interview at any time, and that I may request to listen to the tape. The information obtained from this tape will become part of the research material for this study. My identity will be kept confidential and will not be revealed in any reports generated by this study.

I recognize that these interviews are not designed or intended to be psychotherapy or treatment of any sort. I realize that I may ask about various aspects of the study, and that further information on the project will be provided at my request.

I have read this Consent Form and agree to be a part of this research study.

Signed _____   Date

        _____

Witness _____   (Interviewer)

Appendix D: Interview Schedule

Marital Stability: A Qualitative Study of Jewish Couples: Interview Guide

Introduction: Thank you for being in the study. Brief explanation of the project. Read and sign consent form.

Structure of the interview:

1. Background information.

2. Your marriage as it was when you were first married and how it has stayed the same as well as how it has changed in terms of roles, expectations, and needs.

3. The influence of biological, psychological, and social factors on significant periods in your life.

4. The influence of your own family background and values on your marriage.

5. The influence of your parent's marriage on your own marriage in terms of roles, expectations and relationships.

6. Your assessment of the important factors in your marriage over time.

BACKGROUND DATA

NAME: _____   D.O.B.: _____
OCCUPATION: _____ EDUCATIONAL LEVEL:_____
INCOME: _____

CHILDREN   NAMES   BIRTH DATES

ETHNICITY/RACE: _____   GEOG. ORIGINS: _____
RELIGION: _____
DATE OF MARRIAGE: _____
SPOUSE'S NAME AND BIRTH DATE: _____
WHO LIVES IN THE HOUSE? _____

Appendix D (continued)

A. The marital relationship over time.

1. As you look back to the time when you met (spouse), what attracted you to him/her? What do you think attracted him/her to you?
    a. What interests did you share?
    b. What kind of role did you see yourself playing in the relationship?
    c. What about (spouse)? What role did you see that he/she would
play?

2. What was going on in your life around the time of your marriage? (educationally, vocationally, family, socially)
    a. Did you expect to have to work at the relationship?
    b. How long did you date before deciding to get married?
        How were you sure he/she was the one?
    c. How did your family feel and react to (spouse)?
    a. What was your family's reaction to your marriage? (explore
feelings re: approval/disapproval)

3. How did (spouse's) family react to the marriage?

4. What, if any, adjustments did you have to make in the initial stages of the marriage? Feelings about these changes? What adjustments did (spouse) have to make?

5. I'd like you to think back to the beginning of your marriage. (Ask specific yet open-ended questions about how the person viewed self and spouse in terms of roles, relatedness, and equity. Focus on the quality of the marital relationship, its mutual and non-mutual aspects. For each aspect start with the beginnings of the relationship and then ask respondent how it changed and/or remained the same during child-rearing and post child-rearing periods.) (Roles, expectations, problem-solving during three periods.)

6. Would you describe what your relationship was like from your point of view (roles, responsibilities, etc.)? (beginning, child-rearing, post child-rearing)

    a. Can you tell me how you and (spouse) got along?
    (beginning, child-rearing, post child-rearing)
    b. How did you go about making decisions and solving problems re:
work, friends, recreation, etc.?

Appendix D (continued)

    c. Did your ways of making decisions change over the three periods of marriage? How?

    d. Describe the communication between you.

    e. Are there other factors you feel were important to getting along? (e.g., sense of humor)

    f. Is there one particular area of conflict which stood out during each of the three phases of your marriage?

    g. Can you give me some examples of how you faced and dealt with crises? (health, financial, etc.)? Would you have handled these crises differently at another time in your life?

    h. How were transitional times handled? (pursuing or changing career, decision to have kids, death of own parents or loved one, wife entering work force, serious illnesses, moving) How did they affect your relationship? (strengthen or weaken it?)

    7. How did you handle child-rearing responsibilities? (early, adolescent, now)

    a. What major changes did you notice when you first became parents? What stayed the same?

    b. Adolescent years

    8. How did you feel about your relationship?

    a. What was good, not so good and bad about the relationship?

    b. How much understanding did you feel (spouse) had of you? (differentiation, separateness, etc.) Did this understanding change over the course of the marriage?

    c. How much understanding did you have of (spouse)?

    d. How sensitive was (spouse) to you?

    e. How sensitive were you to (spouse)?

    f. How much respect did you feel from (spouse) in the relationship?

    g. How much did you respect (spouse)?

    h. How did you handle differences (sexual, values, and career, etc.)?

    i. How close and trusting did you feel toward (spouse)?

    j. How close and trusting did you think (spouse) felt toward you?

    9. Overall, did you feel a sense of fairness in the marriage?

    a. Despite differences, did things balance out?

    b. Do you feel that your ways of solving problems as a couple were generally fair to each partner?

Appendix D (continued)

c. Were there situations where one of you had more influence than the other (money, friends, recreation, work, etc.)? (looking for power and equity responses)

B. Can you identify major changes or crises that affected the relationship? How were they handled individually and as a couple?

1. Influences of the following on these crises or changes:
a. Biological (illnesses, birth control, sex. rel.)
b. Psychological (how were you feeling during these times)
c. Social - What was happening in the world which played a role in these changes? or in keeping things the same? (effects of religion, politics of the time, class, family, friends, occupational demands)

C. I'd now like to ask you about other aspects of your life that may have been important to you and the marriage. How have the following played a part in your life together and how have they affected your marital relationship?

1. Religion. (frequency of going to temple: regularly vs. holidays only) differences in your parents, own, and kids' religious upbringing
2. Extended families.
3. Cultural factors including ethnicity and race.
4. Economic factors, including income.
5. How have you gotten along sexually? in terms of nonsexual intimacy, like touching, hugging?
6. Other values, beliefs, moral standards, or a motto that fits for you.

D. PARENT'S MARRIAGE

1. What do you think you learned about marriage from observing your parents?
2. (Ask specific yet open-ended questions about how the person viewed mother and father in terms of roles, relatedness, and equity. Focus on the quality of their marital relationship, its mutual and non-mutual aspects. Ask about memories and observations of their marital relationship.)
How did you view your parents' relationship in terms of roles, relatedness, and equity?
a. Can you tell me how your parents got along?
1. How did they go about making decisions and solving problems?

Appendix D (continued)

       2. Can you give me some examples of how a disagreement was resolved?

     b. Overall, was there a sense of fairness in their marriage?

       1. Despite differences, did things balance out in their relationship?

       2. Did you feel that their ways of solving problems were generally fair to each partner? Were there situations where one of them had more influence than the other (money, friends, recreation, work, etc.)?

       3. What are some important similarities in your marriage compared to your parents' marriage?

       4. What are some important differences?

     3. What were your family's attitudes toward or experience with divorce?

E. In this final section of the interview, I'd like to ask how you see your marriage changing and remaining the same since you and (spouse) first met. I'm interested in how you both have been able to deal with the challenges of remaining together and building a relationship. I also want to understand how you see your marriage being similar to and different from your parents' marriage.

     1. As you look back in time over the relationship, what were the personal qualities of (spouse) and factors in the relationship that kept you together?

     2. How does what you are currently looking for in the relationship differ from your earlier expectations? (needs, roles, relatedness, communication)

     3. How have your expectations changed or remained the same?

     4. In what ways has the relationship changed over the years? In what ways has it remained the same? What do you wish had changed? remained the same? What factors have been involved in the changes and stability? (roles/tasks, relatedness, equity, and communication)

     5. What words best describe what (spouse) means to you now?

      a. In the past?

Appendix D (continued)

6. Is there anything that you wish to add about what were the critical issues or factors that kept you in the relationship? (significant events, periods of assessment and/or renewal)

F. Is there anything else that you think would be important for me to understand about your marriage, yourself or (spouse)?

Appendix E: Scoring Protocol

_____	_____	_____
code #	name	spouse's name

_____	_____	_____	_____
interview date	income	occupation	interviewer

_____	_____	_____
education	age	# of years married

#1 Subject's Initial Attraction to Spouse
`   (0) negative (2) ambivalent (3) positive   _____
#2 Subject's Family Support for Spouse Choice
                                        (1) disapproval (2) approval (3) mixed   _____
#3 Subject's Circumstances at Time of Marriage (0) no conflict (1) conflictual   _____
#4 Role Expectations of Self in Marriage(1) Traditional   (2) Non-traditional   _____
#5 Expectation of Need for S's Effort To Sustain Marriage
                                        (0) no expectations (1) no (2) yes_____
#6 Subject's Perception of the Sexual Relationship   (0) negative (1) mixed (2) positive

	(A)	first phase	_____
	(B)	second phase	_____
	(C)	third phase	_____

#7 S's Perception of the Importance of Sexual Relationship
                        (0) not important (1) important (2) very important

	(A)	first phase	_____
	(B)	second phase	_____
	(C)	third phase	_____

#8 S's Perception of the Presence of Intimacy in the Marriage   (0) no (1) mixed (2) yes

(A) psychosocial intimacy

	(1)	first phase	_____
	(2)	second phase	_____
	(3)	third phase	_____

(B) non-sexual physical touching

	(1)	first phase	_____
	(2)	second phase	_____
	(3)	third phase	_____

#9 S's Personal Style of Decision Making   (0) logical   (1) impulsive   (2) intuitive

	(A)	first phase	_____
	(B)	second phase	_____
	(C)	third phase	_____

#10 External Decision Making Style of the Marriage Couple (0) separate (1) variable (2) mutual
       (e.g. friends, recreation, vacations, purchases)

	(A)	first phase	_____
	(B)	second phase	_____
	(C)	third phase	_____

#11 Style of Handling Interpersonal Differences in Marriage   (1) avoid   (2) confront

       (A) Subject's Style

       (1)   first phase   _____

       (2)   second phase   _____

       (3)   third phase   _____

       (B) S's Perception of Spouse's Style

       (1)   first phase   _____

       (2)   second phase   _____

       (3)   third phase   _____

#12 S's Reported Level of Marital Conflict   (0) minimal   (1) major

       (A)   first phase   _____

       (B)   second phase   _____

       (C)   third phase   _____

#13 S's Perception of the Responsibilities for Child Rearing   (0) individual   (1) mutual

       (A)   children's infancy   _____

       (B)   latency period   _____

       (C)   adolescence   _____

#14 S's Perception of Relationship Variables: Spouse to Subject   (0) no   (1) mixed   (2) yes

       (A) sensitivity

(1) first phase _____   (2) second phase _____   (3) third phase _____

       (B) understanding

(1) first phase _____   (2) second phase _____   (3) third phase _____

       (C) respect

(1) first phase _____   (2) second phase _____   (3) third phase _____

       (D) trust

(1) first phase _____   (2) second phase _____   (3) third phase _____

#15 S's Perception of Relationship Variables: Subject to Spouse   (0) no   (1) mixed   (2) yes

       (A) sensitivity

(1) first phase _____   (2) second phase _____   (3) third phase _____

       (B) understanding

(1) first phase _____   (2) second phase _____   (3) third phase _____

       (C) respect

(1) first phase _____   (2) second phase _____   (3) third phase _____

       (D) trust

(1) first phase _____   (2) second phase _____   (3) third phase _____

#16 S's perception of fairness/equity in the marital relationship   (0) no   (1) mixed   (2) yes

       (A)   first phase   _____

       (B)   second phase   _____

       (C)   third phase   _____

#17 S's perception of communication within the marital relationship   (0) no   (1) mixed   (2) yes

       (A)   first phase   _____

       (B)   second phase   _____

       (C)   third phase   _____

#18 Subject's Overall Sense of Relatedness   (0) negative   (1) mixed   (2) positive

       (A)   first phase   _____

       (B)   second phase   _____

       (C)   third phase   _____

#19 S's Perception of Other Influences on the Marriage
        (0) negative influence (1) no influence (2) positive influence (3) mixed
            (A) <u>finances</u>
(1) first phase ____   (2) second phase ____   (3) third phase ____
            (B) <u>religion</u>
(1) first phase ____   (2) second phase ____   (3) third phase ____
            (C) <u>subject's extended family</u>
(1) first phase ____   (2) second phase ____   (3) third phase ____
            (D) <u>spouse's extended family</u>
(1) first phase ____   (2) second phase ____   (3) third phase ____
            (E) <u>culture/ethnicity</u>
(1) first phase ____   (2) second phase ____   (3) third phase ____
            (F) <u>other values</u> (list in comments)
(1) first phase ____   (2) second phase ____   (3) third phase ____

#20 S's Perception of Similarity of Own Marriage w/Parent's Marriage
                      (0) discontinuity (1) mixed (2) continuity
                            (A)   first phase _____
                            (B)   second phase _____
                            (C)   third phase _____
#21 S's Perception of Own Marital Behavior   (0) instrumental (1) mixed (2) expressive
                            (A)   first phase _____
                            (B)   second phase _____
                            (C)   third phase _____

#22 S's Parent's Attitudes Toward Divorce
                (1) disapprove of divorce   (2) accepting of divorce _____
#23 S's Perception of Interpersonal Fit with Spouse (1) mixed (2) complementarity (3) symmetry
                            (A)   first phase _____
                            (B)   second phase _____
                            (C)   third phase _____
#24 S's Overall Sense of the Marriage as Satisfying (0) no (1) mixed (2) yes
                            (A)   first phase _____
                            (B)   second phase _____
                            (C)   third phase _____

#25 Effect of crises on marital relationship
        (1) strengthen (2) weaken (3) mixed (4) no crises identified (5) no effect
                            (A)   first phase _____
                            (B)   second phase _____
                            (C)   third phase _____
#26 How were crises handled? (1) mutual (2) separate (3) variable (4) N/A
                            (A)   first phase _____
                            (B)   second phase _____
                            (C)   third phase _____
#27a. Effect of transitional times on marital relationship (entering each phase)
        (1) strengthen (2) weaken (3) mixed (4) no issues identified
                            (A)   first phase _____
                            (B)   second phase _____
                            (C)   third phase _____

#27b. How were transitional times handled? (1) mutual (2) separate (3) variable (4) N/A

(A)	first phase	_____
(B)	second phase	_____
(C)	third phase	_____

#28 S's experience of adolescent children   (1) problematic (2) mixed (3) no problem   _____

#29. S's experience of biological factors as affecting the relationship
    a. in subject
    (1) positive (2) negative (3) mixed (4) no effect (5) not identified

(A)	first phase	_____
(B)	second phase	_____
(C)	third phase	_____

    b. in spouse
    (1) positive (2) negative (3) mixed (4) no effect (5) not identified

(A)	first phase	_____
(B)	second phase	_____
(C)	third phase	_____

#30 S's experience of psychological factors as affecting the relationship
    a. in subject
    (1) positive (2) negative (3) mixed (4) no effect (5) not identified

(A)	first phase	_____
(B)	second phase	_____
(C)	third phase	_____

    b. in spouse
    (1) positive (2) negative (3) mixed (4) no effect (5) not identified

(A)	first phase	_____
(B)	second phase	_____
(C)	third phase	_____

#31. S's identification of social factors affecting the relationship (list in comments)
    (1) positive (2) negative (3) mixed (4) no effect (5) not identified

(A)	first phase	_____
(B)	second phase	_____
(C)	third phase	_____