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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Alexander S. Gnilka entitled "A Study of the Development of Long-Term Marriages Lasting 25 Years or More." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Counselor Education.

Vincent Anfara Jr., Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Robert Kronick, Marianne Woodside, Priscilla Blanton

Accepted for the Council:
Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Dr. Vincent Anfara Jr.
Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Dr. Robert Kronick

Dr. Marianne Woodside

Dr. Dr. Priscilla Blanton

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn Hodges
Vice Provost and Dean of the
Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

A Study of the Development of Long-Term Marriages Lasting 25 Years or More

A Dissertation

Presented for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Alexander S. Gnilka

May 2007

DEDICATION

Dedications are a tricky thing. Look at Rambo III, dedicated to the brave freedom fighters of Afghanistan. That had a lot more meaning during the cold war, than a war on terror. A dedication needs to be timeless, something that will weather the course of history and the change of world politics and earthly alliances. Therefore, I dedicate this dissertation to a M. L. Nutt, P.B.R., and Jack Burton. M. L. Nutt you are missed, but not forgotten. Your memory helps serve as a reminder to view all situations as "half-full" not "half-empty." For P.B.R., this dissertation is my blue ribbon, may it be as refreshing as you. Finally, Jack Burton, I have always admired your courage and wit. If anyone ever asks me if I've "paid my dues," I know I can look them square in the eye and say "yes sir, the check is in the mail."

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the development of long-term marriages lasting 25 years or more. Six couples were interviewed using a qualitative case study methodology using the nine task model created by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) as the theoretical framework. This study sought to understand how couples in long-term marriages demonstrated utilizing Wallerstein and Blakeslee's nine tasks, and if they identified any new tasks, a hierarchy, and any changes to the definitions of the tasks. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and a survey. Multiple themes were developed for how participants utilized the nine original tasks in their long-term marriages. In addition, four new themes, (1) the ability to compromise, (2) having outside support, (3) planning for the future, and (4) having similar backgrounds are discussed. A hierarchy was developed determining that the three most important tasks were: (1) providing comfort and support; (2) keeping a sense of humor and shared interests; and (3) building togetherness, intimacy and autonomy. The two least important tasks included: (1) keeping in mind why and how you fell in love, and (2) separating from family of origin. There were changes in three definitions of the tasks including (1) separating from family of origin, (2) keeping a sense of humor and shared interests, and (3) keeping in mind how and why you originally fell in love. Findings also indicated the need for communication, time, and love to be present before any of the developmental tasks can be utilized in a long-term marriage. Recommendations are provided for future research on long-term marriage.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Introduction

The fairy tale is well known: two people fall in love, get married and live happily ever after. Of course life is not a fairy tale, in fact, many marriages end in divorce. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, there was a 50.6% divorce rate for 2003. The divorce rate has increased over the past 50 years, from five divorces to 20 for every 1000 people in the United States (NCHS, 2006). Research on divorce, including reasons for divorce, has increased as well. The literature on divorce focuses on statistics such as changes in the percentage of people divorced, frequency of remarriage, and duration of marriages (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). Factors such as social class, race, religion, and financial reasons are linked to divorce (Clements, Stanley, & Markman, 2004). Studies have also analyzed divorce trends and the negative impact divorce has on the couple, children, and their support groups (Hawkins & Booth, 2005). These studies help researchers and practitioners understand the nature and causes of divorce.

Parker (2000) commented "Marriage was once part of the natural progression into adulthood, a means of achieving independence and an identity distinct from one's parents and kin. Most people married, even though it seems they often felt that they did not really know what they were getting into" (p. 1). This view indicates that many couples now view marriage as "the next step" or just something that you do after you have been with someone for a while. Marriage does not seem to be viewed as a life-long commitment anymore, but more of something you might try. Although marriage has

rewards and is a challenge, working at a relationship does not end once the marriage begins. More research is needed to help show how marriages last over the years rather than focusing on divorce.

Although the bulk of research concerning marriage primarily focuses on divorce, a new trend is to investigate marriages not ending in divorce (Bachand & Caron, 2001; Goodman, 1999; Weishaus & Field, 1988). By shifting the focus to what factors and variables work in a marriage, "a different picture has begun to emerge that may provide clues for forming and maintaining marriages that will have increased survival rates" (Bachand & Caron, p. 106). A variety of studies have attempted to develop factors and variables that contribute to long-term marriages and show how couples work toward making their marriages last. For example, Weigel and Ballard-Reisch (1999) stated that it is the use of maintenance behaviors such as intimacy, similarity, communication, and equity that allow a couple to develop a long-term marriage. Roizblatt, Kaslow, Rivera, Fuchs, Conejero, and Zacharis (1999) found that love, trust, and loyalty are three key factors contributing to lasting marriages in Chile. These success-oriented studies represent the shift in research now focusing on long-term marriages and factors that keep marriages from ending in divorce.

By shifting the focus from what has not worked in marriages to what has worked, new ideas and theories are being formed on how couples can increase the likelihood of remaining married. A variety of studies, using different methodologies (Bachand & Caron, 2001; Cuber & Haroff, 1965; Glenn, 1998; Goodman, 1999; Kaslow & Robinson, 1996; Weishaus & Field, 1988) have investigated the phenomena of long-term marriage in an attempt to understand what helps and hurts a marriage and how couples can remain

married for a long time. Cuber and Haroff were early researchers in the field of long-term marriages and the factors that keep married couples together. Their research placed marriages into two divisions, instrumental marriage where a couple is married because it is more advantageous than being single, and intrinsic marriages, where the couple is committed to the relationship as well as the benefits received from being married. Since this study, multiple factors and types of marriages have been added to the findings of Cuber and Haroff which will be furthered explored in Chapter 2.

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) developed nine tasks that are present in long-term marriages, and it is their theory, which will provide the theoretical framework for this study. Wallerstein and Blakeslee offered a new approach with their study by describing nine developmental tasks or challenges that couples engage in during a long-term marriage unlike other studies that only list tasks that describe or define the couple. Identifying tasks in which a couple needs to engage, helps to eliminate viewing long-term marriages as a point in time, and instead views marriage as an active, constantly developing process. Wallerstein and Blakeslee's idea of marriage being a process fits with studying long-term marriages to help determine where couples are along the process as well as how they have approached and sustained their marriage for such a long time.

Statement of the Problem

Studies on divorce or the dissolution of marriage have been prominent in the literature since 1970. The result of this was that much of the research ignored the study of marriages that remain intact. Studies by Goodman (1999), Kaslow and Robison (1996), and Weishaus and Field (1988) helped initiate the shift in the literature by investigating the factors contributing to long-term marriages. Many of these studies used

quantitative methodologies to investigate this topic (Clements, Stanley, & Markman, 2004; Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia, 2002; Kaslow & Robison, 1996). Research in each of these studies surveyed couples marital "satisfaction" in contexts where the marriage ranged in length from 10 to 30 years. Qualitative studies exploring long-term marriage focused on examining or describing specific factors such as "self-described, happy, long-term marriages" (Bachand & Caron, 2001) or interviewing widows who had been married for 25 years or more (White, 2004). Bachand and Caron limited their research to only those couples who identified themselves as "happily married" or having a "satisfying marriage." In contrast, Hawkins and Booth (2005) studied long-term, low-quality marriages and how these factors affect well-being. They found evidence that some long-term, low-quality marriages are actually more detrimental to a couple that stays together than getting a divorce. This was done using a nationally representative longitudinal study with a multi-item marital quality scale that allowed the researchers to track unhappy marriages over a 12-year period and to assess marital happiness (or unhappiness) along many dimensions (Hawkins & Booth).

The result of all of these studies indicates a gap in the literature on exploring long-term marriage from a developmental standpoint. Current research has an understanding of the factors and types of long-term marriages, but very little is known about the process and how a long-term marriage develops over time. Therefore, the significance of this study lies in the developmental perspective utilized and its anticipated ability to address a gap in the literature.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore long-term marriage from a developmental standpoint, using the nine task model created by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995). More specifically, this study sought to understand how couples in long-term marriages demonstrated utilizing the nine tasks, if they identified new tasks that are not included in the Wallerstein and Blakeslee model, and how each individual described the contribution of each task to the development of long-term marriage. The purpose of this study is reflected in the research questions listed below.

Research Questions

In order to address this study's purposes, three research questions are posed. This researcher will utilize a qualitative, case study methodology utilizing open-ended questions about the experience of marriage and analyze the responses to answer these research questions:

1. How does each individual of the couple demonstrate utilizing the nine tasks that contribute to long-term marriage?
2. In regards to the theoretical framework utilized in this study (Wallerstein and Blakeslee, 1995),
    a. What additional tasks are identified that extend the set of developmental tasks?
    b. Is there some hierarchy that becomes evident from the data collected in this study to demonstrate that the tasks can be arranged from most important to least important?

c. Do the definitions of each task remain the same or have they changed since 1995?

These two research questions are framed by the theoretical framework developed by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) (see review of the literature, Chapter 2, for a more complete description of the theoretical framework).

Definition of Terms

In this section I define words and concepts that are found throughout the study. Many of the definitions have been limited by the researcher for the purpose of this study.

1. *Long-term Marriage*: For this study, I consider a long term marriage as any state-licensed marriage that is over 25 years old. The researcher will exclude any couple that has been legally separated for longer than six months during the 25 year period.
2. *Marriage*: Although the state of Massachusetts currently recognizes homosexual marriages, this study will only focus on heterosexual marriages.
3. *Successful or Happy Marriage*: The literature is not clear on what exactly makes or defines a "successful" marriage. Therefore, this researcher has decided that a successful marriage is one where both members of the couple agree their marriage is "successful" and have a reason or example to support this claim. It is the belief of this researcher that a successful marriage cannot be defined except by the persons in the marriage itself. Both members of the couple do not have to agree with the other's definition. For example, a husband may say his marriage is successful because they have not gotten divorced. The wife may claim her marriage is successful because they love each other. Both husband and wife

claim their marriage is successful, both have a reason to explain their position, therefore they meet the criteria of having a successful marriage.

4. *Unsuccessful or Unhappy Marriage*: Once again, this definition follows the same definition requirements for a successful or happy marriage. Both members of the couple must describe and provide and example or reason of how their marriage is unsuccessful or unhappy. The examples and reasons do not have to be the same, only that both members claim the marriage is unsuccessful or unhappy.

Delimitations

The following delimitations helped to create the structure and boundaries for this study. First, only heterosexual relationships were studied. Homosexual relationships, common law marriages, co-habitation, and other people who are together but not married are not included in this study. Second, this study is only interested in couples who have been married for more than 25 years. Although being married for any number of years can offer insight in the phenomenon of marriage, requiring 25 years helps to focus the study on long-term marriages. Finally, this researcher decided to interview the couples individually rather than as a couple. This allows for each member of the couple to express his or her own thoughts and feelings about the relationship without having to think about or rely on what the other member has to say. I think more honest and open answers were provided using this strategy.

Limitations

This study is limited by a few factors. First, using a qualitative case study design does not allow the findings to be generalized to a larger population. Second, this study is limited in the sample selection because this researcher believes a couple who is satisfied

with their marriage will be more willing to participate than those who are dissatisfied with their marriage. In addition, the scope of this study is only concerned with the experience of a long-term marriage, not the satisfaction or quality of the marriage itself. Finally, this study is limited by the researcher's ability to find couples who were willing to be interviewed, and close enough for the researcher to drive to where they live.

Significance of the Study

This study offers three main contributions to the understanding of marriage. First, counselors and marriage therapists will have a rich and in-depth description of individual experiences in long-term marriages. This can provide information to couples who are married by describing the development of a variety of long-term marriages. It also can show how each couple is unique and developed their own personal ways of creating meaning and commitment to the marriage and how other married couples can do the same. Second, the findings can provide a foundation for future studies to examine factors related to long-term marriages. Over time, these future studies will help aid counselors and married couples develop an understanding of how long-term marriages work and what factors can help create a lasting marriage. Finally, the nine tasks of Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) are compared to the results of this study. This comparison will aid in confirming, challenging, or extending the existing theory that Wallerstein and Blakeslee developed in 1995. The developmental tasks are a new approach to helping couples understand not only where they are in a relationship, but also gives specific areas that a married couple can work on to help increase the likelihood of creating a successful marriage.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 presents the introduction to this study. It addresses the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the significance of this research. In chapter 2, I present the research that focuses on the topic of long-term marriages and a description of the theoretical framework (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995) used to guide this study. Chapter 3 focuses on the research design utilized and the methods for collecting and analyzing the data. The selection of participants is discussed as well as the method for ensuring the trustworthiness of the analysis is addressed. Chapter 4 reports the data analysis for the first research question and a description of the participants. Chapter 5 reports the data analysis for the second research question. Chapter 6 has a discussion and draws conclusions about the study.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Chapter Introduction

This literature review addresses the following areas. Part I discusses how researchers define long-term marriages and marital satisfaction. Part II of this review outlines differences in martial studies methodologies, theories, conclusions, and new trends in the field to attempt to show where strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in the literature and research currently exist. Finally, Part III explains the theoretical framework developed by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) that is used in this study.

Research on the topic of marriage and divorce in recent years has taken a shift from focusing only on divorce to now analyzing what works in marriage. According to data gathered by the 2001 U.S. Census Bureau, about one in five adults have divorced. Actual divorce rates depend on how you want to disaggregate the data, by cohort, time married, number of marriages and the like. From all of these data, the statistic that is always reported is the divorce rate being 50% or above. With this number, those marriages that do not end in divorce are very close to being in the minority (albeit a small one). So what is it that truly makes a marriage last? This question has created a shift in the research. In order to study a lasting marriage the first step is to understand and define frequently cited terms of long-term marriage.

Part I

Part I of the literature review covers the terms and definitions that are common in studies conducted on long-term marriages. Specifically, the definitions of what

constitutes a long-term marriage and satisfaction in a long-term marriage are discussed based on the relevant literature.

Long-Term Marriage

The definition of long-term marriages is up for debate in the literature. Some researchers looked only at marriages that range from a few years to around 20 years (Glenn, 1998; Hawkins & Booth, 2005; Miller et al. 2003; Rogers & Amato; 2000; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999). Research done by Glenn (1998) showed that it was not the time married that makes a marriage long term, rather which cohort you married. In addition, Glenn stated what is or was culturally acceptable during the marriage also has an impact on the number of year married. In other words, depending on when you married such as in the 1970's the divorce rate and length of marriage will be different than those couples married in the 1980's and the 1990's. Weigel and Ballard-Reisch and Miller et al. used a range of married couples and those they termed long-term were married longer compared to some of the younger couples but none were over 20 years of marriage. The study by Miller et al. explained how most of the participants were married for less than 20 years and eliminated those couples married longer than that because they were outliers in the study. By eliminating the older married couples, Miller et al. appeared to detract from the findings which concluded that problems couples bring to therapy are generally the same regardless of when or how long the couple is married (except for the outliers: couples married more than 20 years). Hawkins and Booth had a set number of 12 years married, whereas Rogers and Amato did not look at any couples over the age of 55 which really limits how long a person can be married yet still be considered long-term.

Another group of researches defines long-term marriages as ones that are longer than 20 years (Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia, 2002; Goodman, 1999; Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Phillipson, 1997; Roizblatt et al. 1999; White, 2004). In most of these studies the researchers set a minimum standard number of years participants had to be married in order for the marriage to be considered long term. Researchers with three of the studies, Goodman, Roizblatt et al., White, set the minimum number of years at 25 or more (to the same person) in order to be considered long term. Phillipson, had the lowest required number of years married at 20. Scientifically speaking, none of the researchers provided a rationale for the number of years that were selected as a minimum.

Other researchers (Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia, 2002; Fields, 1983; Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Levenson, Carstensen, & Gottman, 1993) used a range of years married. Fields took the approach to study couples married at least 18 years but a maximum of 30. Kaslow and Robison also studied couples that were married for 25-46 years. Levenson, Carstensen, and Gottman, defined long term on the basis of age and marital duration. Those couples between the ages of 40 and 50, and married at least 15 years, were considered in a long-term marriage. Couples between the ages of 60 and 70, and married at least 35 years, were considered long-term marriages as well. Finally, there are those studies that defined long term as marriages lasting 30 years or longer (Bachand & Caron, 2001; Mroczek, & Spiro, 2005; Robinson, 1994; Swensen & Trahaug, 1985; Weishaus, & Field, 1988). For Robinson, couples had to be married for at least 30 years. In this study the average number of years married was 40.4. This is higher than the study conducted by Swensen and Trahaug who studied couples married for and average of 37.3 years. A study by Bachand and Caron, set a limit of couples needing to be married at

least 35 years, and in the study the mean number of years married was 43. Weishaus and Field's study tops all of the others by requiring couples to be married at least 50 years with a mean of 58.3 years.

What is a long-term marriage and how does a researcher define it? Some studies set a minimum number of years married such as 10, 20, or 30+ years. Other studies have an age and marriage range such as being 40-50 years old and married at least 15 years, or being 60+ years old and being married at least 35 years (Levenson, Carstense, & Gottman, 1993). One definition for a long-term marriage is a couple who has spent more years married to their partner, than years spent being single, or unmarried. Once a couple has reached this point, it becomes easier to analyze the factors of their long-term marriage. Kaslow and Robison (1996) wanted couples married 25 years or more for a very similar reason "One underlying assumption was that couples who have spent more than 25 years together probably share a cluster of characteristics and attributes that have enabled them to sustain their relationships through the stresses and problems that inevitably arise during the course of life" (p. 154).

The lack of a clear definition of what constitutes a long-term marriage makes it difficult to properly compare and, in some cases, find the appropriate literature on the subject. Stanley and Markman (2004) claimed, "One hundred couples were followed for 13 years from the premarital period well through the primary risk period for divorce" (p. 613). One could argue that once a couple has passed through the "primary risk period for divorce" the couple is on its way to a long-term marriage. Still, it is difficult to say that once a couple is past the riskiest divorce period they have made it and will remain married because divorce can and does happen at any age.

Difficulties in Studying Long-Term Marriage

To further complicate the issue, any set number of years used to define a "long-term" marriage will always be challenged depending on the nature of the study. Glenn (1998) for example stated "The difference between mid-term and long-term marriages could result from differences in the typical levels of marital success in different marriage cohorts" (p. 569) meaning, it is not the amount of time married rather which decade you got married in and what else was going on historically. Cultural and historical trends can affect what constitutes a long-term marriage. The U.S. Census Bureau (2001) stated that the median age for first marriages has increased. From 1935-1939, 20.9% of men were married by age 20, from 1975-1979, only 8.1% of men were married by age 20. This rise in the median age certainly affects the amount of time married and also shows how a long-term marriage depends on more than just the number of years a couple has been married.

Researchers also need to consider the fact that the average life expectancy of both men and women has been rising for a number of years with many couples now living longer and having 50+ anniversaries together. The increase in life expectancy also has potential negative effects on long-term marriages as Zaslow in the *Wall Street Journal* (June 17, 2003) reported that later life divorces or 'Grey Divorce' was on the rise. This report discussed the fact that couples are living longer and with the advantages of modern medicine older couples now decide getting a divorce is better than having to tough out another 10 or even 20 years with the same person. This later life divorce trend can affect the results that many long-term marriage studies reported. The literature does not have any apparent studies at present that study long-term marriages that later end in divorce. It

is important to note that Blankenhorn and Sylvester countered the *New York Times* article with their own report in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* (Dec. 10, 2003) stating a lack of evidence of a divorce boom among older Americans. They claimed that the statistics used in the *New York Times* and other articles about "grey divorce" are a result of baby boomers that divorced at some point in their life, but may not be divorced presently. For example, if someone was divorced at age 30 and never remarried and now they are 65, they may claim the status of divorced as a senior, but this is misleading because they did not get divorced when they were over 65. Obviously more research is needed because the researchers do not agree on this point.

Defining "Satisfaction" in Long-Term Marriages

A popular theme throughout all long-term marriage studies is that of marital satisfaction during the marriage. Marital satisfaction is often used as a phrase that refers to the quality, happiness, and or the fact that basic needs are being met between marriage partners. Not all researchers use this definition or even agree on what "satisfaction" really means in a marriage. In addition to a variety of definitions across different studies, differences exist on how satisfaction is measured and reported in each study as well. It is important to note that some studies (Fields, 1983, Kaslow & Robison, 1996, Levenson, Carstensen & Gottman, 1993, Vaillant & Vaillant, 1993) link satisfaction and long-term marriages together. These studies basically assume that any long-term marriage must also be satisfying.

Some researchers doing qualitative work in the field have relied on self-reported satisfied couples to conduct their studies on long-term marital satisfaction (Bachand & Caron, 2001). The couples in this study identified themselves as happy with their

marriage. This is the least stringent and most subjective definition of satisfaction found in the literature. Fields (1983) used the premise "that warm, trustful, sexual relationships satisfy the basic needs of each marital partner" (p. 37). This definition at least has some criteria that can be measured. Roizblatt et al. (1999) developed an entire section of a questionnaire to cover marital satisfaction including mutual confidence, respect, loyalty, happiness, love, and unity between both partners. Kaslow and Robison (1996) also developed a questionnaire that had both internal and external reasons about the couples' perceptions on what makes a satisfying marriage.

There are also studies that utilized a variety of standardized tests or interview questions that attempt to measure marital satisfaction (Kaslow & Robison, 1996, Levenson, Carstensen, & Gottman, 1993, Roizblatt et al. 1999, Vaillant & Vaillant 1993). A full explanation of these assessments will be covered in the section titled "Assessments" found later in this chapter. Using an assessment in addition to interviews was one way to measure couples and their satisfaction. Many of the researchers who used a form of assessment were attempting to place their participants into categories of satisfied or unsatisfied married couples (Clements, Stanley, & Markman, 2004; Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Levenson, Carstensen, & Gottman, 1993; Roizblatt et al. 1999; Vaillant & Vaillant, 1993).

The research is slowly starting to recognize that there is a difference between long term marriages and satisfaction. For many years, there was an understanding that couples in a long-term marriage were in fact satisfied, or only satisfied couples stayed in a long term marriage (Hawkins & Booth, 2005). Many of these studies often had long-term and satisfaction in their titles and assumed the connection between the two. For example

Bachand and Caron (2001) studied "Happy Long-Term Marriages," Fields (1983) "Satisfaction in Long-Term Marriages," and Kaslow and Robison (1996) "Long-Term Satisfying Marriages." Soon a new perspective on long-term marriages and satisfaction emerged as Parker (2000) explained: "Not all long-term marriages are satisfying for both spouses and those who stay in an unhappy marriage do so for a variety of reasons" (p. 7). It is these "reasons" that have started new research dividing marital studies into long-term marriage studies and satisfaction in long-term marriages.

Part II

Theories of Marriage

Karney and Bradbury (1995) offered a different take on long-term marriages by analyzing a large sample of the longitudinal works conducted on marriages. They found that four theoretical perspectives have guided most of the research on marriage, the social exchange theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), behavioral theory, attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969), and crisis theory (Hill, 1949). The result of their study on these four theoretical perspectives concludes that no single theory is able to cover all of the criteria needed to be considered a complete theory of marital development. The strengths and weakness of each of the four theories is described as follows:

> Social exchange explains the distinction between marital satisfaction and marital stability but does not account for variation over time. Behavioral theory addresses the intricacies and implications of marital interaction but fails to link interaction to the broader context of marriage. Attachment theory relates marriage to the individual histories of spouses but does not explain the development of a marriage once two people come together. Finally, crisis theory relates marriages to external circumstances of

> the couple but does not provide mechanisms of change over time. (p. 8)

The end result of the study on each of these theoretical perspectives is future research might benefit from combining two or more theories together.

Assessments

A broad range of assessments are used in studies on long-term marriages. Many of these assessments attempt to measure satisfaction over the course of a married couples life retrospectively, whereas others are given at different times during a couples marriage. Determining how and what kind of an assessment to use is up for debate in the literature.

Both Kaslow and Robison (1996) and Roizblatt et al. (1999) used the standardized test, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) developed by Spanier (1976) in addition to questionnaires they independently developed about marital satisfaction. The DAS allows for couples to be divided into three different groups, satisfied, mid-range, and dissatisfied based on a 32 item questionnaire filled out by both members of the couple. Levenson, Carstensen, and Gottman (1993) and Vaillant and Vaillant (1993) both used the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale in their studies. This 15 item inventory developed in 1959, measures satisfaction with questions like “Do you confide in your mate?” and “Do you agree on how to handle finances?” Clements, Stanley and Markman (2004) utilized the MAT or Marital Adjustment Test which was a modified version of the Locke-Wallace MAS. In this study those couples were assessed on a score of 100 points, those scoring above 100 for the duration of the study were defined as happily married or satisfied, those scoring below 100 were defined as either distressed or unsatisfied.

Goodman (1999) used the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Index (Schumm et al., 1985) with "a coefficient alpha of .96 at the time of development" (p. 88). The KMSI was used in addition to questions developed by Goodman to develop a deeper understanding of the factors that positively and negatively affect marital satisfaction. Swensen and Trahaug (1985) utilized a variety of different tests such as the Love Scale Index and the Marriage Problems Scale to help establish the commitment level in a long-term marriage and the expression of love and how it changed over the course of the marriage. Both Goodman and Swensen and Trahuag used more than one test to better study and measure satisfaction in long term marriages. The literature does not explain a particular trend towards one standardized test or another, but the Locke-Wallace MAS was used or adapted more than other assessments.

When standardized tests were not used, a qualitative approach was in the form of interview questions. A few studies (Bachand & Caron, 2001; Weishaus & Field, 1988; White, 2004) developed an interview instrument and rating procedure. Both Bachand and Caron, and White used semi-structured interview protocols where several main questions guided the interviews, but participant's responses and answers dictated the rest of the interview. Both of these studies also utilized a thematic analysis of the responses given to develop a meaning from the data. Finally, both studies only conducted one interview with the participants, unlike Weishaus and Field where interviews were conducted at four different times throughout the couple's marriage. Weishaus and Field also made sure that the interviews were read and rated by a "well-trained team of raters, each interview being read independently by two raters who resolved any differences in conference" (p. 767). It should be noted that Weishaus and Field analyzed interviews

from a larger Berkeley study conducted from 1908 through 1920. This study certainly benefited from using a larger sample and multiple interviews resulting from a bigger budget than other studies conducted on long-term marriage.

Participants/Sampling

By requiring the number of years married from 10 to 20 to deem the marriage "long-term" sampling problems occur. Some couples had multiple marriages over 10 to 20 years, leaving the reader to question if a person can have more than one long-term marriage? This question can apply to any couple married for any number of years. What happens to those couples married 20, 30, or 40 or more years, but then got a divorce? These former long-term couples are worth studying, because they must many of the same factors as current long-term couples. Comparing the two groups is certainly needed in future studies. This review of the literature recognizes this is an area where more research needs to be done, but is more concerned with the literature that concentrates on those couples who have remained married.

Fincham, Paleri and Regalia (2002) looked at couples who were mostly in their first marriage. Other studies did not specify if the marriage had to be the couples first or if they could previously have been divorced (Goodman, 1999; Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Levenson, Carstensen, & Gottman, 1993; Roizblatt et al., 1999; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999). It is surprising that many studies on the subject of long-term marriage did not factor in or account for those couples who may have been married at an earlier time but later got divorced. How many of the participants in these studies have been divorced and what influence does that play on the findings? By not including if any of the participants have been divorced it is not possible for these studies to determine if the

long-term marriages were influenced by the previously divorced participant working harder or having more inside knowledge into what makes for a lasting marriage. Long-term marriage studies need to understand the degree to which previous marriage experiences effect current marriages.

Most participants in the literature on long-term marriages are white, middle class couples (Fields, 1983; Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia, 2002; Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Swensen & Trahaug, 1985; Weishaus & Field, 1988). Couples interviewed were often picked because they volunteered as they did in the Weishaus and Field study, or were referred to the study by students, faculty or friends involved in the studies conducted by Bachand and Caron, and Goodman. These convenience samples are reflective of the methodology that was used. Most of the interviews done on long-term marriage were for qualitative studies that were interested in the rich descriptions of long-term marriages. These studies although more limited in their generalizability, were specific in what they measured and used interviews designed to measure marital status and satisfaction (Bachand & Caron; Weishaus & Field; White, 2004). All three of these qualitative studies used a smaller sample size ranging from 15-17 couples, or for White, 25 individuals. These sample sizes are expected from a qualitative type of methodology.

Quantitative studies used a variety of research sampling techniques as well. Some used nationally collected survey data, which were either processed using new criteria, or studied over consecutive years in order to draw conclusions (Glenn, 1998; Hawkins & Booth, 2005; Rogers & Amato, 2000). These studies followed large, national numbers of married couples over many years to examine the changes in marital satisfaction and the resulting impact on long-term marriage. Although these studies had large and often

statistically significant findings that were generalizable to a larger population, they were also limited in scope. The results of the survey and data comparisons were secondhand and not directly normed for the research questions the authors developed.

Most of the quantitative studies used standardized assessments such as the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) (Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Roizblatt et al., 1999), the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale, the Autonomy and Relatedness Inventory (ARI) or the Quality of Marriage Index (QMI) (Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia, 2002; Goodman, 1999; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999). The sample populations for these studies once again used convenience sampling techniques such as volunteer participants from local churches or synagogues (Fields, 1983) or surveys sent home with children from a local school (Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia). A study by Rogers and Amato (2000) was a rare case because the sample was gathered using a "clustered random-digit-dialing procedure to locate a national sample" (p. 736).

The effect of these sampling techniques was a lower level of generalizability and also a question of which results can be generalized, and to what population. Another drawback for data gathered from older national survey's (Glenn, 1998; Hawkins & Booth, 2005; Rogers & Amato, 2000) was the data only gives information about that particular group of married couples. This means what may have held true during that time may not hold true today.

Quantitative vs. Qualitative Research

Another shift in the literature is the shift from quantitative work to the inclusion of qualitative work as well. This shift is occurring across all fields in the social sciences,

and marital studies are no exception. Most of the work that has studied long-term marriages was quantitative in nature.

A study by Weishaus and Field (1988) was one of the earlier qualitative studies done. It covered marriages that lasted from 50 to 69 years. This study tracked a variety of married couples from the Longitudinal Berkeley Older Generation Study and was used as a model for future research. This was the only qualitative study that covered multiple interviews over a long period of time. Although this study covered interviews taken at different points in time while a couple was married, the researchers only did the last interview. The interviews from 1930 through 1970 were prior to this study. Weishaus and Field could only rate the results of the interviews conducted prior to their study. The results of this in-depth study showed six types of long-term marriages, stable/positive, stable/neutral, stable/negative, curvilinear, continuous decline, and continuous increase. These results are explained in more depth under the "Findings of Long-Term Marriage Studies" section of this chapter.

Two other qualitative studies that took place more recently focused on a smaller sample of participants and had different results from the Weishaus and Field study (Bachand & Caron 2001; White, 2004). For Bachand and Caron, the results of their smaller 15 couple research concluded that each relationship had numerous and unique factors that led to each marriage lasting for at least 35 years. A few of the similar factors were friendship, love, and similar backgrounds or interests but the authors really stressed the individual uniqueness of each couple. White, had different results as well, concluding there were three main themes, accepting the imperfection of the relationship, the strength of the marital dyad, and obligation as an indicator of caring. White further concluded

that social norms and the historical context of the marriage were predominant factors in there long-term marriages.

The qualitative work in this field was able to achieve a much broader range of emotions and responses versus the quantitative work that relies primarily on standardized tests. Although standardized tests reflected some depth, they were much more important for generalizing the results back to a larger population of married couples. The qualitative studies lacked the generalizability, but offered a personal definition of what created a successful marriage from a couple by couple basis. Some couples in a quantitative study achieved a score that was deemed satisfied yet during an interview the couple might only be tolerant of each other. Results like this were only achieved through more in depth qualitative work.

Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Design

Unless you could follow a couple around for the duration of their long-term marriage with a camera and a set way to calculate their satisfaction, results from all studies on this subject are going to vary. The biggest problem was most studies were only a glimpse or a snapshot in time of a couple's satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The next day, hour, week, or month could bring about entirely different results. The one unhappy couple due to financial problems one week inherits a lot of money the next week and the satisfaction level rises, yet the researcher did not see this. Another perfectly satisfied couple has a sick in-law move in and their satisfaction drops, yet the researcher has already taken the data and moved on. Weishaus and Field (1988) commented that only through a longitudinal study over a long period of time would help eliminate the rise in

fall of marital satisfaction (if any) from daily life hassles and will result in an accurate portrayal of overall marital satisfaction. In other words, taking multiple snapshots and interviews over time with married couples can help track changes in marital bliss that a one-time interview or assessment test would otherwise miss.

A split in the literature of longitudinal versus cross-sectional experimental design was apparent. Some researchers attempted to track the same couples over a longer period of time by sampling the same couple more than once, whereas others followed the couples for many years at a time (Hawkins & Booth, 2005; Glenn, 1998; Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Rogers & Amato, 2000; Weishaus & Field, 1988). In this group, Hawkins and Booth, and Weishaus and Field, conducted longitudinal studies that followed couples over many years, 12 and 50 to 69 respectively, to demonstrate how marriage and satisfaction changed over a period of time. The result of these long-term studies provided not a glimpse, but rather an in-depth, continuous look at how satisfaction in marriage changed over time. Other researchers attempted to compare two different cross sectional data sets to examine changes between the two different groups. In these studies couples that have been married for 5, 10, and more than 15 years were all studied and compared at the same time in order to determine if there were any differences in satisfaction depending on the amount of time married (Glenn; Kaslow & Robison; Rogers & Amato).

Although some do not take as much time as some longitudinal studies, cross sectional studies are often easier to conduct, and much of the literature is made up of these kinds of studies. In order to attempt to reduce the snapshot effect that cross-sectional studies can provide the researchers used a variety of techniques to reduce the

impact. One way was to include a large number of subjects and to replicate the study to help reduce the potential for those couples who were having a bad day (Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia, 2002; Goodman, 1999; Miller et al., 2003; Roizblatt et al., 1999; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999). In two studies, Fincham, Paleari, and Regalia and Miller et al., the researchers used hypothetical, or potential problem areas in marriages and had their couple's rate how their satisfaction levels would be affected by these scenarios. This method made the couples think more about how they would react versus their current state of mind.

In other studies, questionnaires were designed to measure a couple's motivation to stay together, intimacy, and how they react around each other in stressful situations (Goodman, 1999; Roizblatt et al., 1999; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999). Each of these studies was able to measure how the couple has reacted over the years to stress and also analyze their current levels of satisfaction. Bachand and Caron (2001) and White (2004) make up for the snapshot effect by utilizing qualitative interviews that focus on a variety of couples and analyzing the themes that develop. Although the interviews were done only once, they were in-depth and allowed for the couple to create their own version of what they considered to be a successful and satisfying marriage.

Karney and Bradbury (1995) discussed the fact that most of the literature on marriage was based on cross-sectional data and these studies reveal little about how a marriage gains or loses satisfaction in addition to how the marriage becomes more or less stable over time. This study also comments on the fact that there are over 100 longitudinal studies about marriage but these are often overlooked because the research is spread out over a long period of time and fields of study. From their viewpoint,

longitudinal studies offer the best structure for understanding long-term marriages and how they develop and change over time.

New Trends in Long-Term Marriage Studies

Hawkins and Booth (2005) studied the effects of long-term, low-quality marriages on well being. This study looked at some of the factors and reasons a couple stay in a long-term marriage that is not satisfying and the negative results it has on individual well-being. What Hawkins and Booth reported is some long-term, low quality marriages can be more detrimental than divorcing and in almost every case remaining unhappily married "is associated with significantly lower levels of overall happiness, life satisfaction, self-esteem and overall health" (p. 445). This study also revealed a gap in the literature for studies needed on what keeps people in these unhealthy long-term marriages. Hawkins and Booth claim that personality issues, self-esteem and economic factors may keep people in long-term marriages despite the poor effects it may have on their health and well being.

Another new trend in the research is exploring pre-marital data from couples and newlyweds. This new approach attempts to explain the phenomenon of long-term marriages are a result of couples happiness and satisfaction prior to right at the start of getting married (Clements, Stanley & Markman, 2004; Huston, Niehuis, & Smith, 2001). Both of these studies looked at satisfaction in long-term marriages by exploring what variables and factors each couple had prior to getting married and how that effected their first few years together. Huston, Niehuis, and Smith claim that newlywed couples differ in both intensity and negativity of their relationship and how they respond early on determines if they remain married or get a divorce. Disillusionment with the relationship

for newlyweds and sharp declines in affection and love in the first 2 years of marriage are more prone for divorce. Unlike other studies in this field, these results suggest the first two years of marriage are a good predictor of what helps create a long-term marriage.

Another trend is examining long-term marriages from a multicultural perspective. Sussman and Alexander (1999) examined couples from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds and what affect that played on marital satisfaction and longevity. The results were inconclusive, but the study did provide insight into other research done on the area where most married couples were of the same faith and not inter-faith couples. The study also attempted to explore the role of ethnic identity and marriage. Sussman and Alexander learned that most European Americans can determine how big or small a role ethnic identity will play in their marriage, but the same is not true for ethnic minorities.

There have been many studies on inter-racial marriages and the obstacles that these unions present, but there are not many that explore long-term marriages involving interracial couples or those with mixed-religions backgrounds. Interracial marriages have often been seen as taboo, and are often overlooked even in the academic world. Davidson (1992) explored negative biases that many therapists have toward interracial marriages and theories that a lot of research is not done on these couples due to covert or overt bias towards the subject. Another reason that these studies may be overlooked is that interracial marriages vary greatly in terms of geographic location (Davidson; Tucker & Kernan, 1990). Although the research has indicated some factors that keep couples together, there are not many studies that compare these factors to couples who stray from the norm of middle-class European Americans. Homosexual, interracial and mix

religious orientations are just a few variables that are often overlooked and understudied in the field of long-term marriage. What is agreed upon is the need for more studies that include a variety of different factors from ethnicity, religion, and culture to be included in order to see how these factors play out marriages (Davidson; Robinson, 1994; Sussman & Alexander, 1999; Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan).

Findings of Long-Term Marriage Studies

Every researcher defines and measures long-term marriages in a variety of ways, therefore results are often diverse and at times in opposition with each other. Some basic similarities can be drawn from all of the results but only in broad terms. One theory that has been tested and often supported is the curvilinear shaped marriage, where happiness or satisfaction is at the greatest at the beginning of the marriage, dips in the middle years of marriage and then goes back up in the later years of marriage (Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999; Weishaus & Field, 1988). Weishaus and Field found that 7 of 17 couples in their study followed this trend although "The duration of dip in the curve, its timing, and its depth all varied considerably" (p. 769). One common thread in the curvilinear couples was the introduction of children resulted in the start of the dip, and once the children left satisfaction began to increase. These results of a curvilinear pattern are also supported in a study by Weigel and Ballard-Reisch where data collected from 143 married couples showed similar results with satisfaction being at the highest 0-6 years in the marriage, the lowest from 15-23 years of marriage and then higher for 24+ years of marriage. Even with these results, the researchers commented "marital quality does not

appear to be influenced by the length of the marital relationship" (Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999, p. 66).

To help explain the phenomenon of a drop in satisfaction in the middle years, but without evidence that time married is the reason, researchers are looking for other explanations. For Miller et al. (2003) it was stated that most presenting problems and the number of problems married couples bring to therapy did not increase or decrease with the amount of time married. So, curvilinear relationships were not encountering more problems during the dip, rather problems remained a constant regardless of time spent married. Another curvilinear pattern was refuted in a study by Glenn (1998) who stated the pattern resulted from cohort differences, among other potential variables. This study took into account divorce rates, cultural changes, and cohort differences to conclude that "marital success, as that concept is measured here, between mid-term and long-term marriages are largely cohort differences" (p. 575). For Glenn, it was not how long you were married, rather, when you were married and what was going on at that time. The whole idea followed the logic that your grandparents stayed married because it was what their generation did. A cohort in the 70's though, saw more freedoms and responsibilities given to women and the divorce rate increased (among other generational differences).

Looking at cohort differences was followed up with a study by Rogers and Amato, 2000, that analyzed differences between two marriage cohorts on a national level. The results of this study supported Glenn's earlier findings that cohort differences often result in greater discord or less satisfaction depending on when you were married. In Rogers and Amato's study, the couples married between 1981 to 1997 had more stressful marriages than those married in the cohort from 1964 to 1980. The main reasons for the

changes in satisfaction cited were shifts in the sharing of housework, larger household income coming from wives, work-family conflict and other reasons.

Another point about curvilinear marriages was each reporting period only offers one view of a marriage at one point in time. Throughout any life experience there were ups and downs and not all marriages fit the same pattern. Longitudinal studies often did not reflect those marriages that ended in divorce, couples that were widowed, or abandoned, or even couples that were divorced then happily remarried. More recently, studies turned away from trying to find out what kind of a pattern one can expect from marriage (curvilinear etc) to what has worked over the long haul. These studies look more at what a couple did to remain together and satisfied, versus how happy they were at a given point in the relationship (Bachand & Caron, 2001; Fincham, Paleari & Regalia, 2002; Goodman 1999; Roizblatt et al., 1999; White, 2004).

Vaillant and Vaillant (1993) examined the theory of the U-Curve of marital satisfaction building on longitudinal studies of marital satisfaction which followed married subjects for 40 years or more. This study used existing research and data to look at the U-Curve and concluded "Figure 1 provides no evidence from our sample of 51 matched couples that there is a U-curve in marital satisfaction over the life course" (p. 233). Vaillant and Vaillant concluded that although more research needs to be done, if anything their results showed that marital satisfaction declined in later years of marriage instead of rising as the U-curve theory claims it should.

Cuber and Harroff (1965) developed a taxonomy which grouped long-term marriages (lasting 10 years or longer for their study) into five relationship groups. The five groups are vital, total, conflict-habituated, devitalized and passive-congenial. The

groups were then divided into two subgroups, the first was vital and total relationships labeled intrinsic. The vital relationship was identified as highly involved couples who had not lost their own identities and enjoy each other when they were together but do not always have to intrude on the other person's time or space. A total relationship involved the couple being constantly together and there were few if any conflicts or tensions in the relationship. Cuber and Harroff described intrinsic relationships as the couple was psychologically together in life matters and they have a strong desire to be together. They found that intrinsic relationships were ideal, but less common than the other three types of relationships. The other three, conflict-habituated, devitalized and passive-congenial were titled utilitarian relationships. Conflict-habituated relationships were defined as having extensive tension and conflict but it was controlled. The couple often was verbally argumentative and fight about anything. Devitalized relationships had little conflict but there was little passion or excitement about the other person as well. Most of these relationships involved moments where the couple was once in love but no longer, yet they remained together out of a sense of duty and responsibility. Finally, passive-congenial relationships were similar to devitalized marriages but these marriages were never intimate to start with and were considered marriages of convenience.

Other taxonomies and models of types of marriages were added on to or revised the findings of Cuber and Harroff's (1965) work. Weishaus and Field (1988) for example, developed a model of six types of long-term marriages which is very similar to the findings of Cuber and Harroff:

1. Stable/positive. These marriages are stable over time, maintaining moderately high to high satisfaction and generally positive affect and

interaction throughout their duration. (They are similar to Cuber and Harroff's intrinsic marriages)

2. Stable/neutral. These couples never experienced high affect, but married for reasons describe in Cuber and Harroff's passive-congenial type.
3. Stable/negative. Affect in these couples is primarily negative throughout the marriage, almost from it inception. (Similar to Cuber and Harroff's conflict-habituated or devitalized category)
4. Curvilinear. These marriages demonstrate the oft-described pattern of drop in satisfaction some time in the mid-years of the marriage, with a subsequent rise to as high or almost as high a level as in the early years.
5. Continuous decline. Such marriages are similar to stable/negative, but instead of the same low level of affect almost from the beginning, they erode gradually and more or less continuously.
6. Continuous increase. No theoretical model for contemporary Western marriages posits such a type, nor did we find any in our sample, but logically and conceptually this is a possible trajectory. (p. 765)

From these six types Weishaus and Field determined that "continuity and change" (p. 770) both take place in a marriage. They claimed that marriages were evolving and developing as life events and circumstances were taking place.

Some researchers looked at factors or characteristics of long-term married couples. Many of these results attempted to describe or schematize certain aspects or traits that were found in many different couples. Klagsbrun (1985) interviewed 87 married couples and developed eight traits: the ability to change and adapt to change, the ability to live with the unchangeable, assumption of permanence, trust, balance of dependencies, enjoyment of each other, cherished/shared history, and luck. Lauer and Lauer (1986) followed this study up by using a much larger sample size (351 couples). In this study they were able to identify seven reasons or factors for marital success, spouse as best friend, liking spouse as a person, marriage viewed as a long term commitment, marriage

as a sacred institution, agreement on aims and goals, spouses growing interesting each year, wanting to have relationship work. Mackey and O'Brien (1995) also interviewed 60 couples and developed five factors that they identified as important to long-term marriage: containment of conflict, mutuality of decision-making, quality of communication, similar values on trust and respect, and satisfying sexual and psychological intimacy.

There were a variety of other factors which were considered to be important assets to achieving a long-term successful marriage such as intimacy and forgiveness. Both of these factors were considered positives in marital quality and satisfaction according to Fincham, Paleari and Regalia (2002). In their study, forgiveness helped couples maintain and create a lasting relationship over long periods of time (average length of marriage 21 years). Similar to these findings, Goodman (1999) found that intimacy was positively related and hostile control negatively related to martial satisfaction in couples married over 25 years. This study also found that older couples rated their intimacy and satisfaction as higher than the middle aged couples lending a bit of support back to the curvilinear model. Another interesting result was both intimacy and reduction of hostile control, were more important than autonomy. This result was counter to a study by Kaslow and Robison (1996) that named intimacy as important fewer times (22%) than love (82%), mutual trust (81%), and mutual respect (77%). Although intimacy was rated as important, at least 11 other factors were named more times in the study by the participants over intimacy.

Alford-Cooper (1998) compiled data on over 500 couples and asked couples to identify eight characteristics that helped them stay together. From these eight

characteristics, three groups were created. The first group was the most commonly cited characteristics given by the couples, trust (82%), loving relationship (81%) and willingness to compromise (80%). The second group was mutual respect (72%), need for one another (70%), and compatibility (66%). The final group was made up of children (57%) and good communication (53%). Each couple ranked or placed more importance on one particular characteristic than another couple, but overall, the findings found that group one (trust, loving relationship, and willingness to compromise) were ranked more often and higher than any other characteristics needed to have a long-term marriage.

The rankings of love, and loyalty in the Kaslow and Robison (1996) study were further supported by a 1999 study done by Roizblatt et al. Roizblatt et al., findings also had love as the number one priority of marital satisfaction followed by loyalty (similar to mutual trust) and then mutual support (similar to mutual respect). Both Kaslow and Robinson, and Roizblatt et al. did quantitative studies, but support from the qualitative side was also found in Bachand and Caron's (2001) study finding love and friendship as two primary themes that were attributed to making a satisfactory marriage. For this study of 15 couples, a total of 12 participants named both friendship and love as factors that contributed to their long marriage (over 35 years).

The most recent studies on satisfaction and long-term marriages have started to make another turn. For Roizblatt et al. (1999) their study was a part of a much larger international study on long-term marriages from Canada, Israel, South Africa, to Chile and more. So far the results were very similar across countries with love, trust and loyalty at the top of every list, as need ingredients for a long-term satisfying marriage.

White (2004) did a qualitative study with Welsh widows and their views on their long-term marriages (married 25 or more years). This study of English women found very similar themes to the work done by Bachand and Caron's findings of strength in a dyad, and a focus on caring for the other person out of love. Finally, a new way of looking at divorce versus staying in a long-term yet unsatisfying marriage was conducted by Hawkins and Booth (2005) who explored the effects of long-term low-quality marriages. In their study, most couples that remained together in a low-quality marriage were often worse off than couples that divorced. These findings are starting to help shift areas of future research to perhaps some of the more negative aspects that marriage can have on an individual as well as the positives.

Part III

Theoretical Framework

The studies discussed so far analyzed long-term marriage for a set of factors or characteristics that were common or needed in order for the marriage to be called "long-term." Other studies attempted to group marriages into a particular style or group such as a stable marriage, or u-shaped curvilinear marriage. The book *The Good Marriage* by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) offered a different point of view on the subject where long-term marriages were achieved through a set of nine steps and processes. This approach helped to show the complexity of marriage and also how marriages were constantly changing based on the needs of the couple. This study was different because rather than focus on characteristics of a couple, it looked at long-term marriages from a developmental standpoint.

The research conducted by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) studied 50 couples from northern California who were primarily white and middle class. Wallerstein and Blakeslee commented:

> Although fifty couples may seem too small a number from which to make sweeping conclusions about marriage, my conclusions are not meant to explain all there is to know about this subject. My intentions are much more modest. I have looked for commonalities as well as individual differences, hoping to find patterns on which to build general hypotheses. (p. 9)

Each of these couples either volunteered or were recruited by colleagues and associates of Wallerstein and Blakeslee. The sampling criteria was straightforward, both husband and wife had to consider the marriage a happy one, the couple had to be married for longer than nine years, and the couple had to have produced one child as a result of the marriage. On average, the participants were over 40 and the time married was 20 years. It is also important to note that Wallerstein and Blakeslee included couples who were in either their first or second marriage.

Four Categories of Marriage

From the results of their study, Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) found that the "good marriages" fell into one of four categories named romantic, rescue, companionate, or traditional. The researchers admitted that other types of marriages exist and that this typology was not exhaustive, but rather best reflects the results developed from this study.

Romantic marriages were described by having at their core a "lasting, passionately sexual relationship" (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995, p. 22). These were the relationships where the married couple never fall out of love and described themselves as almost being destined to be together. The individuals in this marriage described

themselves as halves with their partner being their other half. In other words, the marriage was the whole and the couple often had a hard time of having an individual identify without including the other person. It was this view of each partner completing the other that leads to this statement: "This sense of unity, combined with the intense continuing idealization of early courtship fantasies and real gratitude for the fulfillment of the relationship's promise, reinforces the romantic marriage" (p. 44). This kind of romantic marriage according to Wallerstein and Blakeslee was found in about 15% of the couples studied. The key descriptors for this type of marriage include mutual love, passion, excitement, and ecstasy.

A rescue marriage was one where security and healing from previous hurts could take place. Usually these were couples who had to deal with pain and sorrow, or some kind of traumatic experience and their marriage allowed them a chance to heal. In other words "The healing that takes place during the course of the marriage is the central theme" (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995, p. 22). A rescue marriage was both a good marriage or a bad one depending on how the couple responded and grew in the marriage. The basic concept of healing in this kind of marriage was described by one partner finding something that was of comfort or complements something they want in the other partner. For example, a young man who is shy may be attracted to a talkative outgoing woman whom he sees as confident in her ability to talk to lots of people. The woman on the other hand may be attracted to what she sees as the man's quiet demeanor and ability to not have to talk all the time but looks rather stoic. Wallerstein and Blakeslee stated "In a happy marriage the fitting together of psychological difference has the power to heal" (p. 100). Another way to describe a rescue marriage was both partners find something

safe and secure in what the other has to offer, a way of sharing their own fears and needs where the other was able to provide the level of support needed.

Companionate marriages were considered one of the most common types for younger married couples because of the changes in social values that have taken place. The key words of friendship and equality were often used. These types of marriage often have couples maintaining a balance between their marriages and their careers. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) explained:

> A companionate marriage is founded on the couple's shared belief that men and women are equal partners in all spheres of life and that their roles, including those of marriage, are completely interchangeable. Both husband and wife lead important parts of their lives outside of the home. While one partner, usually the wife, may take time out from her career to devote attention to young children, she remains committed to both work and family. (p. 155)

This type of marriage was considered one of the more difficult to maintain and from their data 40% of marriages from the 1970's to the 1980's were companionate marriages. Most couples in this kind of marriage often needed to be trusting and able to delay gratification on a variety of personal and professional levels at times.

The traditional marriage was the final one in Wallerstein and Blakeslee's (1995) typology. A traditional marriage had each partner following a clear set of roles and expectations in the marriage. Many times the husband was the primary income provider and the wife takes care of the children and household tasks. There were also two types of traditional marriage in this typology, an older and newer type. The older type had the husband as the provider and head figure in the family with the wife as the homemaker and children raiser. Combined, they created a safe stable environment in which to raise a family with a strong emphasis being placed on taking care of, and being nice to each

other. The newer model of traditional marriages had the mother/wife being both a homemaker and a career woman. The husband was most likely more involved in the work force but the wife does some work as well. Having children was still important but not the primary reason for the marriage or the roles that each partner provides.

Each of these four types of happy marriages can also result in a poor or bad marriage which Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) termed the "antimarriage". Couples that fit in each of the four categories discussed above, found a way to maximize the positives and reduce the negatives throughout their marriages. The antimarriage occurs when the negative factors that are in every marriage begin to takeover and outnumber the positives factors. Wallerstein and Blakeslee further explained about the antimarriage, "At that point the relationship can become a lifeless shell or a collusive arrangement in which the neurotic symptoms of the partners mesh so well that the marriage endures indefinitely" (p. 23). Each type of marriage has it's own antimarriage that can then be created. The romantic marriage can cause the husband and wife to become too interested in each other at the expense of children and careers. A rescue marriage becomes a place for couples to continually replay their past traumatic experiences and never find relief or a way to get over their past. A companionate marriage can turn a couple into a partnership where they are more like roommates, see little of each other and only have their careers. Finally, the traditional marriage has so much attention being placed on the children that when they finally grow up and leave the couple is left not knowing or understanding the person to whom they are married.

Nine Developmental Tasks of Marriage

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) commented that a good marriage is one where couples are able to cope and overcome the challenges of life with their partner. By constantly building and learning new ways to cope with the stress of life, good, lasting marriages are able to fall back on past experiences and successes during difficult times. These experiences have been broken down into nine developmental tasks that each good marriage was consistently working on during their marriage. The nine tasks are as follows:

(1) Separating from the family of origin

This first task requires a couple to separate psychologically from each of their families of origin. The emotional ties and family roles that many people grew up with need to be shifted and created anew within the marriage. This is not the same as moving away from one's parents, rather becoming independent and relying on one's own judgment to make decisions regarding the marriage and problems that may arise. The focus must shift away from the couple's identity as a son or daughter and center around being a spouse and making them your first priority. Couples who are unable to separate from their families of origin often have difficulties in their marriages feeling like decisions made in their marriage have to be verified or discussed with one partners parents first.

(2) Building togetherness, intimacy and autonomy

This second task generally coincides with the first task of separating from the family of origin. In this task the married couple builds togetherness and autonomy by sharing a vision of how they want to spend their lives and remain committed to one another. From a developmental standpoint the couple has progressed from "me" stages in early

childhood to “I” stages in adulthood to “we” stages in marriage. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) commented, “Henceforth, the couple’s decisions reflect consideration of what is best for him, what is best for her, and what is best, on balance, for the marriage” (p. 63). Many married couples need to realize that marriage will often force a person to give up some of the advantages of being single, and those couples who attempt to remain married and single at the same time will often not have a successful marriage.

(3) Maintain privacy while becoming a parent

This task was part of the structure of the research done by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) when they made sure their sample included only married couples who are parents. In this task the marriage must change with the responsibilities a child brings, attempting to balance both the relationship between husband and wife, as well as the new relationship with the child. The married couple now has new identities in addition to being friends and lovers they are also parents, but the friends and lovers side of the marriage needs as much attention and care as the parental side does. Married couples who do not handle this stage well are often unhappy because everything changed when the kids showed up, or their own personal needs were never met because the children’s always came first before the spouses.

(4) Confront and master crises of life

This task is very broad in the sense that crises are often defined by each marriage. Each crisis can cause a marriage to grow stronger, weaker, or destroy it depending on the situation and how the couple responds to the event. There are two types of crises that a marriage will go through, expected ones (such as retirement, midlife, aging) and unexpected ones (serious illnesses, fires, sudden death of parent or close friend). Those

couples who can successfully manage crises are brought closer together and acknowledge the help that each partner gives and receives to each other. Those marriages that are unable to cope with a crisis often fall prey to scapegoating or blaming each other which can weaken or even end a marriage. In order for a couple to be able to handle and master the crises of life they need to have a strong foundation of support for each other in order to get through the hard times.

(5) Create a safe haven to allow for conflict

Communication and negotiating are important aspects of marriage, but the fifth task is for creating a place where couples can fight and have a conflict. There are times during a marriage where disagreements are going to take place and a level of understanding that each partner will not exit the marriage as result needs to be in place. As Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) stated, "Thus the first step in establishing a safety zone where strong anger can be expressed freely is to make it clear that the fighting will not breach the walls of the marriage" (p. 145). By having a safe place to vent and disagree with one another, many marriages are able to grow from this knowledge. Being allowed to disagree without fearing retaliation is what this task is all about. The strong marriage is one where the forces of what brings a couple together are stronger than the forces pulling them apart. In order to help assure that the marriage stands a better chance of remaining together when both members understand that they are allowed to express anger and hurt, but also be aware of when they are hurting or going too far.

(6) Establish and maintain a worthwhile sexual relationship

This task revolves around couples maintaining intimacy and sex throughout their marriage. It is important for both members of the couple to understand what the other

wants and needs in order to be satisfied. This task often takes patience and understanding in order for both partners to accommodate the other person's needs and desires. Sex in a relationship helps to stimulate and keep interest between the married couple. It acts as a bond as well as a way of communicating and understanding the other person. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) commented that sex helps "in maintaining both the quality and the stability of the relationship, replenishing emotional reserves and strengthening the marital bond" (p. 192).

(7) Keep a sense of humor and shared interests

This task looks for married couples to keep a close connection in their everyday life through humor and finding things you like about your spouse. The idea that sharing laughter or a special joke or phrase between the two married people helps to keep the attraction between the two alive. In addition to humor it is also important for married couples to share some of the same interests. The sharing of common interests is where a married couple gets to do something together. Keeping common interests around such as talking, hiking, taste in music or countless others, helps to ward off boredom or a routine where the marriage revolves around individual activities instead of shared ones.

(8) Provide comfort and support to each other

Providing emotional support and comfort is one of the main aspects of a marriage. This task is where each member of the marriage can go to be unhappy or scared or worried, they can show their vulnerable side and know that it will be taken care of and understood. Understanding body language is important to know what the other person needs at the moment. Everyone in a marriage gets something from their partner, and this task when successful results in couples who know when and how to give support to their partner.

(9) Keep in mind why and how you originally fell in love

The final task is one of having almost a "double vision" of the marriage. This is where the couple is able to remember why and how they fell in love while keeping focus on the present and knowing they cannot go back in time. It is similar to reflecting back on good times or bad in the marriage and using those thoughts to help with the present situation. Wallerstein and Blakeslee explained this task:

> Of course a marriage cannot live on memories of courtship and fantasies alone. But if their life together has some genuine gratifications along with the idealizations of the past, a couple is better able to accept deprivations in the present. They are able to forgive a partner for not delivering on all that was promised by keeping in mind what they have received and by hoping for future fulfillment. (p. 324)

Each of these tasks is utilized and often achieved in a successful long-term marriage. These tasks are a great framework for future studies on long-term marriages. By asking questions that touch on the main themes in each of these tasks this theory can be expanded upon or modified depending on future results. Unlike other studies, Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) offered a way of looking at marriage as a developmental process, or a work that is constantly changing unlike a list of characteristics or a typology of marriages that is stagnant. By using these tasks to explore marriages that have lasted 25 years or longer, one can attempt to view marriage through the lens of where a marriage is on a developmental level in addition to the overall experience and positive and negative factors of a long-term marriage.

Conclusion

The literature on long-term marriages has shifted over the years. Long-term originally was only about 10 years of marriage and now studies of couples that have been

together 50+ years are being conducted. Consensus on a definition for long-term is not clear as of yet, but most of the literature is leaning in the direction of 25 or more years, partly due to an increase in human longevity. The ever-present shift in research from only quantitative studies to more qualitative work has also enriched the literature on how satisfaction is not only measured but also explained and defined by interviewed participants. Although some articles utilized a mixed methods approach, most articles used either quantitative or qualitative methodology but not a mixed methods approach. Finally, the theory of marriage being curvilinear is still up for debate. Some author's findings supported the theory, whereas other authors achieved the same result, yet explained the reason for the curve is due to cohort and historical context differences versus the traditional explanation of children reducing marital satisfaction. The literature is not clear on which view is correct, but most current research does at least agree that not all marriages are curvilinear in relation to satisfaction. Almost every article addressed problems and difficulties in doing research on the topic of long-term marriage. Longitudinal studies offer the best hope for achieving accurate results, but due to the cost and time needed, cross sectional studies are the most prominent at this time. The study of long-term satisfying marriages has come along way, but more research is still needed in the field. No articles covered same-sex relationships, and most of the studies of heterosexual relationships focused on those couples of the same religion, ethnicity, and social class. In order to have a better understanding of what factors make a long-term, satisfying marriage, these other variable need to be explored to find that common theme that spans across all peoples, regardless of sexual preference, race, age, ethnicity, or economic status.

Chapter 3

METHODS

Chapter Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore long-term marriage from a developmental standpoint, using the nine task model created by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995). More specifically, this study: (a) sought to understand how couples in long-term marriages demonstrated utilizing the nine tasks, (b) explored the identification of any new tasks that are not included in the Wallerstein and Blakeslee model, and (c) focused on how each individual described his/her contribution to the development of long-term marriage. This study is designed around these three research questions:

1. How does each individual of the couple demonstrate utilizing the nine tasks that contribute to long-term marriage?
2. In regards to the theoretical framework utilized in this study (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995):
    a. What additional tasks are identified that extend the set of developmental tasks?
    b. Is there some hierarchy that becomes evident from the data collected in this study to demonstrate that the tasks can be arranged from most important to least important?
    c. Do the definitions of each task remain the same or have they changed since 1995?

This chapter explains and describes the methods and procedures that were used to conduct the study. There are a variety of figures and tables in an attempt to show the

flow of the study and research process. Figure 1 is a flow chart outlining the research process for this study. The University of Tennessee requires all research methods to be approved by the Institutional Review Board, and this study has been granted such approval.

Assumptions and Rationale for Using a Case Study Design

The research questions for this study lend themselves to a qualitative case study design. Merriman (1998) stated, "A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved" (p. 19). For this study, there is a strong need to understand the meaning and situation of those couples involved in a long-term marriage. Bachand and Caron (2001) also described that an "in-depth" study provided by using a qualitative methodology was needed "to gain further insight into the long-term marriage" (p. 109).

There are a variety of definitions for what constitutes a case study. Merriman (1988) offered this definition "A qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (p. 21). In addition to this definition, Merriman (1998) also explained that a case study design is also used for a researcher to attempt to understand a particular phenomenon in order to understand what factors and characteristics might exist within that phenomenon.

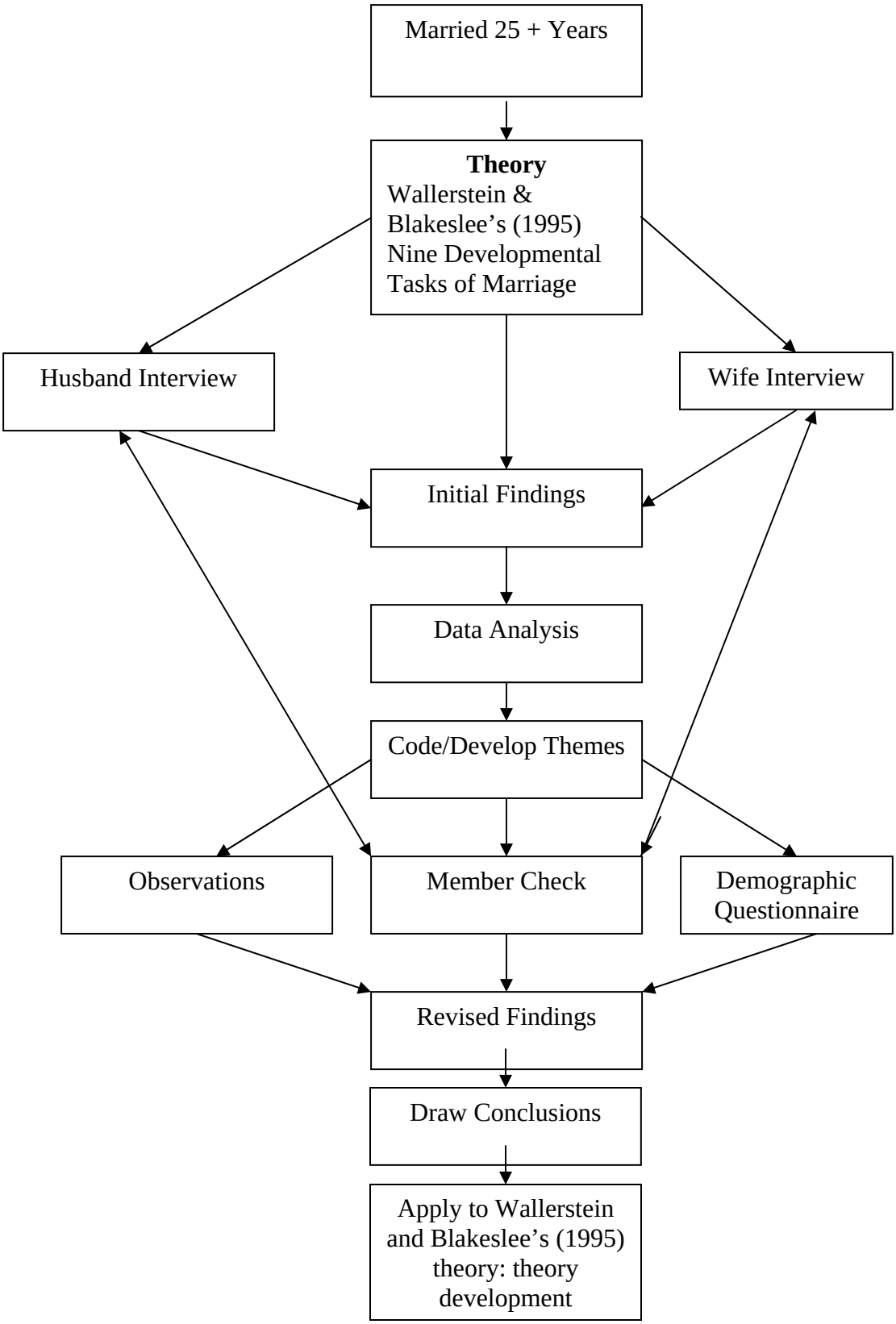

Figure 1 - *Research Process*

Type of Design: Exploratory/Descriptive Case Study Design

Merriman (1998) described an exploratory/descriptive case study where "…the end product of a case study is a rich, 'thick' description of the phenomenon under study" (p. 29). For this study, the case is both exploratory and descriptive in that it focuses on the descriptions of how a lasting marriage develops and is "bounded" by the required number of years married (at least 25). In addition, an exploratory/descriptive case study methodology allows for a detailed account of the phenomenon under study. I feel that it is very important for the experience of a long-term marriage to be explored in order to determine how the marriage developed over time. While exploring the phenomenon of long-term marriage development, I also gained in-depth descriptions of the development of these long-term marriages. An exploratory/descriptive case study also allows itself to be open to how complicated a phenomenon may be in that there are a variety of factors that may have helped to create it, opposed to just one.

This study is both exploratory and descriptive because it meets aspects listed by Olson (in Hoaglin & others, 1982, pp. 138-139) that help form this type of case study. Olson commented that an exploratory/descriptive case study uses the advantage of hindsight and is relevant to the present, shows the influence on the passage of time, covers many years, and presents information from a variety of viewpoints. These points cover long-term marriage very well due to the length of the time married (25 years), it relies on couples recalling past events, and it also allows for each member of the couple to offer different reasons and viewpoints on how their marriage has lasted. An exploratory/descriptive design also allows for the participants studied to help guide any hypotheses or themes that develop during the data collection. My theoretical framework

helps to focus the direction and type of questions asked, but it is the participants who will explain the phenomenon of long-term marriage and what that experience is like for them.

Qualitative Methods

A case study allows for a variety of methods to be implemented in order to collect data that ultimately answers the questions posed. Merriman (1998) commented, "a case study does not claim any particular methods for data collection or data analysis" (p. 28). Maxwell (1996) discussed how qualitative methods can be either structured or unstructured. The topic of long-term marriage and the research questions asked lend themselves to a qualitative approach. Creswell (1994) stated that the qualitative paradigm often fits problems that are exploratory in research and have an unknown number of variables. For this study, the factors that make a marriage long-term are unknown and can vary from couple to couple.

Maxwell (1996) also outlined five areas which suit qualitative studies and each area fits with the overall focus of this study and the topic of long-term marriage. The first area involves understanding the participants' perspectives. Second, qualitative research helps in understanding the context of the participants and how this context affects their actions. Third, the researcher can discover new or unplanned occurrences that can lead to new theories or areas for future study. Fourth, qualitative studies assist in understanding the process of how the events and actions of the participants take place. Qualitative research is often more concerned with the process rather than the outcome. Finally, qualitative research is useful in developing casual explanations for how events and different process can lead to certain results.

Qualitative research allows for meaning to be developed and interpreted by the researcher as well as the reader and participants. Creswell (1996) stated "Qualitative research is interpretative research" (p. 147). For this study on long-term marriages, there is not a right or wrong answer to how the couples have stayed married for as long as they have, instead it is a study on how the couples have remained married. Using a qualitative method allows for the exploration of the how and why a couple has developed a long-term marriage, and takes into account the time and history of a couple, rather than attempting to only take a snapshot of the couple in it's current state.

Role of the Researcher

For this study, the research followed the University of Tennessee ethical guidelines by completing and gaining approval of the IRB board (Appendix A). Also, all ethics for conducting research as outlined in the American Counseling Association code of ethics (2005) were upheld. All participants were informed of the purpose of the study, how their information was used, as well as what rights they had in participating or not participating. Consent forms (Appendix B) were explained and signed by all participants before any data collection took place. All names (if used) in reporting the findings of this research were changed (i.e., a coding system of numbers (1-6) and letters (H and W) was created) to attempt to maintain confidentiality. The 1-6 represents the six couples in this study while the "H" and "W" signify husband and wife.

From a personal standpoint, I have a bias about long-term marriage. My model for marriage comes from my parents who have been married for over 30 years. I have observed them throughout my life and developed ideas about how their marriage works and I have also discussed with them why they have stayed together and the factors that

have contributed to this. In order to reduce this bias, I made sure that certain measures within the research were followed. First, triangulation of the data was used to help increase the validity of the research (further explained in the data analysis section). Also, member checks were performed on each individual participant in order to allow them an opportunity to verify the results of the data analysis (also explained in the data analysis section).

Participants

The participants were chosen from a convenience sample of heterosexual married couples that the researcher knows or have been referred to him. This is called snowballing/convenience sampling. Convenience sampling according to Merriman (1992) selects a sample based on "time, money, location, availability of sites or respondents" and snowball sampling "involves asking each participant or group of participants to refer you to other participants" (p. 63). For this study 12 volunteer participants were used (6 couples). This number was only a starting point for the research and more couples would have been interviewed if the researcher had not reached the point of saturation where no new information is gathered from the interviews. Saturation was actually reached after interviewing six couples. From these six couples the researcher knew three couples very well. This provided a few additional insights into each of these couples in the form of observations and the participant's willingness to be open and honest. This researcher felt that knowing three of the couples allowed for a more in-depth interview and honest answers from the participants. Each couple will be legally married to each other for no less than 25 years. Any couple that has been legally separated for more than six months did not meet the criteria of the study and were not

interviewed as a result. The participants were determined by availability and willingness to participate. This study is interested in the length of marriage and therefore includes any couples who have been divorced as long as their current marriage meets the minimum number of years required (25) for this study. Also, couples from all types of religions, ethnicities, and other cultural backgrounds are eligible for the study. Both members of the couple were required to participate. If one member did not want to participate, a different couple was selected. Only those couples that both gave their consent were allowed to participate in the interview. All interviews took place in a location in which the participants were comfortable. Each member of the couple was interviewed separately for approximately one to two hours. All interviews were audio taped for later written transcription.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected from three sources: interviews, observations, and a demographic questionnaire. These three data sources facilitated answering the three research questions that guide this study. Table 1 identifies the research questions and which data sources are used to answer them.

Informed consent was discussed with each participant before data collection occurred. Because both members of the couple were interviewed separately, a demographic information sheet (Appendix C) was filled out at the beginning of the interview (Appendix D) by both participants. The demographic information sheet gathered the following information: gender, age, date of marriage, race or ethnicity, state where they were married, age when married, number of children (if any), and age of children (if any).

Table 1

Matrix of Research Questions and Data Sources

Questions	Document	Interviews & Member Check	Observations
How does each individual of the couple demonstrate utilizing the nine tasks that contribute to long-term marriage?	Demographic Questionnaire	Both members of couples married 25 years or longer	Gathered during interview process
How does each individual of the couple describe his/her own contribution to the development of a long-term marriage?	Demographic Questionnaire	Both members of couples married 25 years or longer	Gathered during interview process
In regards to the theoretical framework utilized in this study (Wallerstein and Blakeslee, 1995), a. What additional tasks are identified that extend the set of developmental tasks? b. Is there some hierarchy that becomes evident from the data collected in this study to demonstrate that the tasks can be arranged from most important to least important? c. Do the definitions of each task remain the same or have they changed since 1995?	Demographic Questionnaire	Both members of couples married 25 years or longer	Gathered during interview process

Interviews

Because a case study design is being used for this study, interviews are an appropriate method for gathering the necessary data. Merriam (1992) explained "Interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them" (p. 72). In this study, attempting to analyze the experience of a lasting marriage that has gone on for over 25 years is best done by way of an interview rather than observation for the sake of time and the limited resources of the researcher. In addressing the primary purpose of the interview, Patton (1990) stated, "We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot observe… we cannot observe feelings, thoughts and intentions… We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world" (p. 196). The study of lasting marriage needs to be told by those who live and experience it, and the best way for that type of data to be gathered is through an interview.

Initial contact with members of the couple occurred over the phone. This conversation covered the nature of the project, how the couple was identified as a potential volunteer, and the confidentiality of the research. If requested by a participant, the informed consent form was mailed or read over the phone to each member of the couple before a face-to-face meeting. If the couple both agreed to participate, a time for a face-to-face interview was established.

At the time of the interview, each member of the couple was read the informed consent form. Any questions involving the research project were discussed at that time. The researcher's contact information was also given prior to the interview in case the participants had follow-up questions they wished to discuss at a later time. Next, the

demographic information sheet was reviewed and completed by both participants. It was during this time that the researcher made observation notes on how the couple interacted during the entire introduction period.

The semi-structured interviews (see Appendix D) lasted approximately one to two hours and were audio-recorded. A semi-structured interview allows for a few possibilities while collecting data. Kvale (1996) commented that there are a set of themes and points that will be covered in a semi-structured interview, and it also gives openness to the order of questions as well as allowing for follow-up questions in order to explore the answers given in more depth.

Prior to the interview, both individuals of the couple were given a list of the nine tasks (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995) and their definitions (Appendix E). The interviewee was allowed to read these tasks prior to the interview and asked any clarifying questions at the start of the interview. After this, part one of the semi-structured interview protocol was followed, looking for details into the development of their long-term marriage. Follow-up questions were also asked that are not on the interview protocol if the researcher felt it would aid in the collection of data related to the rich and descriptive experiences about the marriage. The investigator also asked follow-up questions if the researcher did not understand or needs further elaboration on a topic, until both researcher and participant felt satisfied that the participant's experience had been communicated. After the nine tasks had been fully discussed, part two of the interview covered questions relating to ranking the importance of the tasks as well as new tasks that the participants may want to share.

In addition to relating the interview questions back to the research questions (see Table 2), the interview questions can be categorized into five types (Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 1998): experience/behavior, opinion/value, feeling, knowledge, and background/demographics. These five types have also been arranged in a table to show the variety of questions used in the semi-structured interview (Table 2).

All tape recordings and transcriptions will be kept in a secure, locked cabinet at the researcher's home. Interviews were conducted in a private room to ensure maximum confidentiality. It was very important that each interview was tape recorded in order to accurately reflect and remember what the interviewee stated and to ensure an accurate transcription of the interview. All tapes were destroyed after the study was completed. Confidentiality was maintained by changing all descriptive information that might allow a third party to identify any of the participants.

Observations

During the course of the interviews, the researcher gathered data based on observing the couple and the individual members of the couple during the interview process. In addition to what the interviewee said, the researcher also noted any body language, emphasis, or facial expressions that agreed or disagreed with what was being said. In counseling this is noting the congruence of a person, where their body is in line with what they are saying. An example is a person who laughs when they are talking about a sad moment such as the death of a friend. By observing this, the researcher asked follow-up questions about the confusing behavior and noted the response. Observations took place during the entire interview process, especially during the introduction period where the couple was together to learn about informed consent, the nature of the study,

Table 2

Interview Question Analysis

Research Question	**Interview Protocol Questions**
How does each individual of the couple demonstrate utilizing the nine tasks that contribute to long-term marriage?	Part I Q - 1, 2, 3, 4 Part II Q – 1, 2
In regards to the theoretical framework utilized in this study (Wallerstein and Blakeslee, 1995), a. What additional tasks are identified that extend the set of developmental tasks? b. Is there some hierarchy that becomes evident from the data collected in this study to demonstrate that the tasks can be arranged from most important to least important? c. Do the definitions of each task remain the same or have they changed since 1995?	Part II Q – 1, 2, 3, 4
Type of Interview Question	**Interview Protocol Questions**
Experience/ Behavior	Part I Q - 1, 2, 3, 4
Opinion/ Value	Part I Q – 1 Part II Q – 1, 2, 3, 4
Feeling	Part I Q – 1, 4, Part II Q – 1, 2
Knowledge	Part I Q – 1, 2, 3, 4 Part II Q – 1, 2, 3, 4
Background/ Demographic	Part II Q – 4

and filling out the demographic survey. Notes were made by the researcher for things such as where the couple sits (beside each other, apart, etc.), and how they interact (directive, playful, etc.).

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the constant comparative method. Merriam (1998) defined the constant comparative method as "The researcher begins with a particular incident from an interview, field notes, or document and compares it with another incident in the same set of data or in another set. These comparisons lead to tentative categories that are then compared to each other and other instances. Comparisons are constantly made within and between levels of conceptualization until a theory can be formulated" (p. 159). This process was followed and repeated for each interview until a general theme was developed by the researcher. Each consecutive interview was compared to the last in order to develop themes and create an understanding of the data.

All interviews were coded. Creswell (1996) commented that a researcher needs to sort through all of the data and form categories of information and attach codes to them. This creates the basis for the themes and the exploration that the qualitative researcher is attempting to build. Anfara, Brown and Mangione (2002) developed three iterations of analysis for qualitative work. The first iteration involves initial codes and surface content. The second iteration narrows the data down further into pattern variables and themes. The final iteration develops the data and codes into theory that directly answer the research questions. The three iterations of analysis are included for this study on the following page titled code mapping. Each of the iterations were documented and followed to develop the themes and findings discussed in Chapter 4.

Code Mapping: Three Iterations of Analysis (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002, p. 32)

(Third Iteration: Application to Data Set)

Code Mapping for A Case Study for the Development of Long-Term Marriage:

1. How does each individual of the couple demonstrate utilizing the nine tasks that contribute to long-term marriage?

   Themes: 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, 1f, 1g, 1h, 1i

2. In regards to the theoretical framework utilized in this study (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995),
   a. What additional tasks are identified that extend the set of developmental tasks?

      Themes: 2a

   b. Is there some hierarchy that becomes evident from the data collected in this study to demonstrate that the tasks can be arranged from most important to least important?

      Themes: 2b

   c. Do the definitions of each task remain the same or have they changed since 1995?

      Themes: 2c

(Second Iteration: Pattern Variables -- Components)

1a. Degree of Difficulty	2a. Ability to Compromise
1a. Developing a New Family Identity	2a. Having Outside Support
1b. Common Interests	2a. Planning for the Future
1b. Balancing "I" and "We"	2a. Having Similar Backgrounds
1b. Supporting Spouses "I" Needs	2b. Top Tasks: Two, Seven, Eight
1b. Achieving Togetherness, Intimacy, and Autonomy	2b. Bottom Tasks: One, Nine
1c. How Privacy Changed	2c. Change Task One –Distance
1c. How to Keep Some Privacy	2c. Change Task Seven – Divide
1d. Health Issues	2c. Change Task Nine – First Date
1d. Dealing with a Crisis as a Team	
1e. Disagreements are Needed and Productive	
1e. Confidence Disagreeing with the Spouse	
1e. Picking and Choosing a Battle	
1f. Sex Versus Intimacy	
1f. How Sex and Intimacy Change	
1g. Sense of Humor	
1g. Shared Interests	
1h. Types of Support	
1h. Support Leads to Togetherness	
1i. How Initial Attraction Plays a Role in Marriage	
1i. Remembering but not Dwelling in the Past	

(First Iteration: Initial Codes/Surface Content Analysis)

1a. sense of superiority	2a. give and take
1a. sense of guilt	2a. understanding
1a. already separated from family	2a. friends
1a. role of physical distance	2a. in-laws
1a. becoming independent	2a. finances
1a. blending of old and new family values	2a. retirement
1b. similar activities	2a. shared vision
1b. same views	2a. can not be too different

(First Iteration: Initial Codes/Surface Content Analysis)

1b. keeping “I” in marriage
1b. shift from “I” to “we” back to “I”
1b. achieved prior to marriage
1b. second nature
1c. not a problem
1c. balance time
1c. set up rules
1c. share responsibility
1d. health issues with family
1d. health issues with spouse
1d. health issues with children
1d. learning to be a team
1d. always on same side
1e. understand other point of view
1e. learning from past arguments
1e. sense of trust
1e. prevent festering
1e. patience
1e. understanding
1f. be close to spouse
1f. time
1f. nice
1g. balance
1g. personality
1g. basis for relationship
1g. attraction
1h. listening
1h. support
1h. acts of service
1h. team
1h. love
1h. security
1i. missing piece
1i. remembering first date
1i. can not go back
1i. create new memories

2a. family values
2b. fall back on
2b. highest ranked
2b. basis for marriage
2b. very important
2b. not important
2b. not difficult
2c. physical distance
2c. not difficult
2c. too broad
2c. hard to talk about both
2c. personality versus activity
2c. not the same person

Data: Interviews	Data: Observations	Data: Questionnaire

Methods of Verification

In order to verify the trustworthiness and validity of the data, a technique called triangulation was employed. Maxwell (1996) stated that triangulation collects information from a broad range of sources using a variety of methods. Maxwell continued "This reduces the risk that your conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific method, and it allows you to gain a better assessment of the validity and generality of the explanations that you develop" (p. 76). In this study, there are three data sources that assisted with triangulation, the interviews, demographic questionnaire, and observations. Figure 2 shows the matrix of findings and sources used for data triangulation.

An important final step was the thematic structure was presented to each of the participants. The participants were asked to consider the overall findings and to judge whether the thematic structure reflects their own individual experience. This experience is called "member checking." Any disagreements made on the themes by the participants weree taken under advisement.

Table 3 was used to document the process of category development. This table was adapted from Constas (1992) and categorizes the themes that are developed for this research into three components: origination, verification, and nomination. Each of these categories are further broken down by three temporal designations: A priori (deduced knowledge), A posteriori (knowable from experience), and iterative (known through repetition).

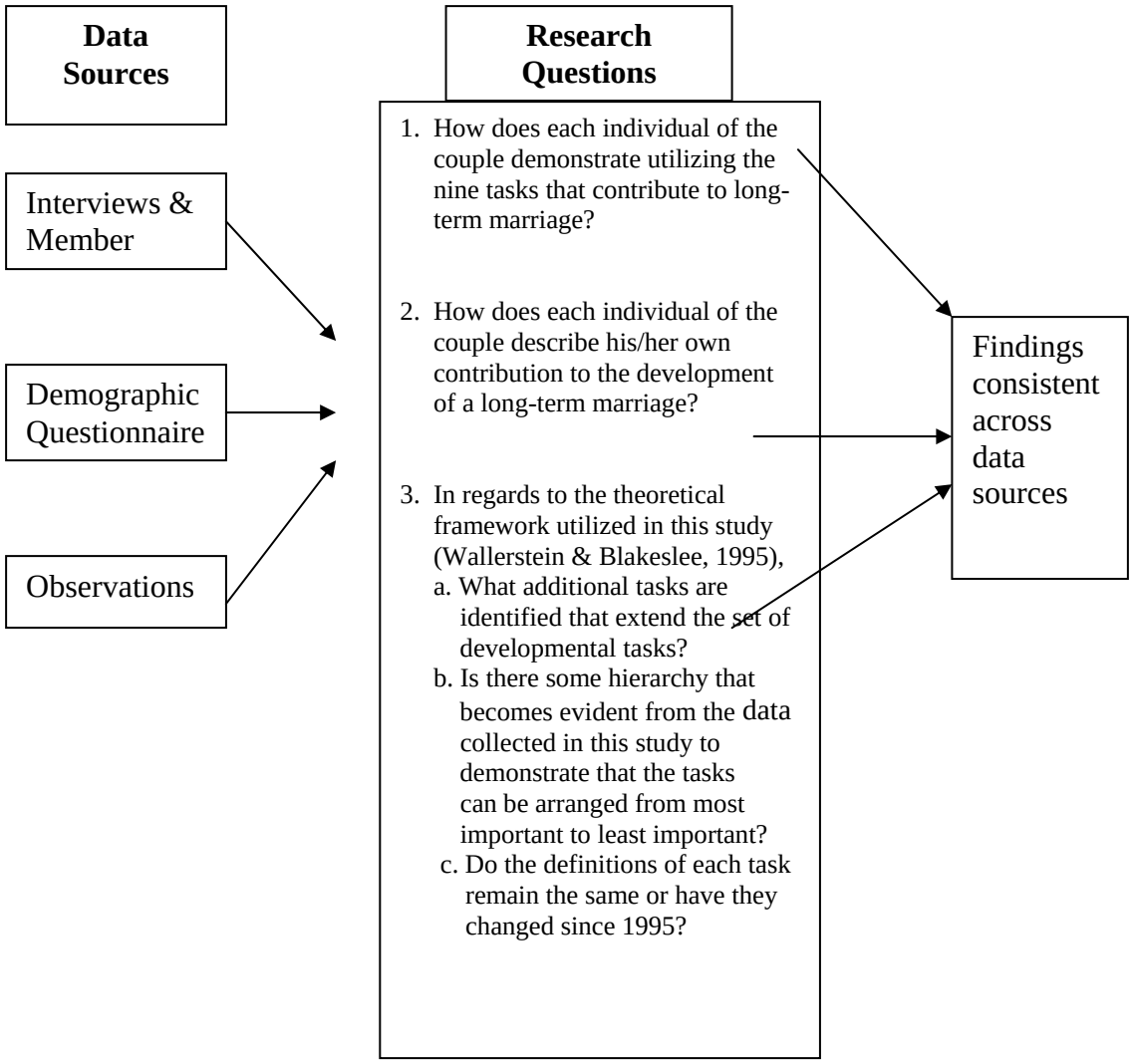

Figure 2 - ***Data Sources Used For Triangulation***

Table 3

Component of Categorization Temporal Designation (Constas, 1992)

Origination: Where does the authority for creating categories reside?

	A priori	A posteriori	Iterative
Participants		2a, 2b, 2c	
Programs			
Investigative			
Literature	1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, 1f, 1g, 1h, 1i		
Interpretative		2a, 2b, 2c	

Verification: On what grounds can one justify a given category?

	A priori	A posteriori	Iterative
Rational			
Referential			
External			
Empirical	1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, 1f, 1g, 1h, 1i		
Technical			
Participative		2a, 2b, 2c	

Nomination: What is the source of the name used to describe a category?

	A priori	A posteriori	Iterative
Participants			
Interviews		2a, 2b, 2c	
Observation			
Questionnaire			
Reflective Writings			
Literature	1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, 1f, 1g, 1h, 1i		

Category Label Key:

1a. Degree of Difficulty
1a. Developing a New Family Identity
1b. Common Interests
1b. Balancing "I" and "We"
1b. Supporting Spouses "I" Needs
1b. Achieving Togetherness, Intimacy, and Autonomy
1c. How Privacy Changed
1c. How to Keep Some Privacy
1d. Health Issues
1d. Dealing with a Crisis as a Team
1e. Disagreements are Needed and Productive
1e. Confidence Disagreeing with the Spouse
1e. Picking and Choosing a Battle
1f. Sex Versus Intimacy
1f. How Sex and Intimacy Change
1g. Sense of Humor
1g. Shared Interests
1h. Types of Support
1h. Support Leads to Togetherness
1i. How Initial Attraction Plays a Role in Marriage
1i. Remembering but not Dwelling in the Past
2a. Ability to Compromise
2a. Having Outside Support
2a. Planning for the Future
2a. Having Similar Backgrounds
2b. Top Tasks: Two, Seven, Eight
2b. Bottom Tasks: One, Nine
2c. Change Task One
2c. Change Task Seven
2c. Change Task Nine

Summary

A case study design using qualitative data collection procedures afforded the best method available to answer the research questions posed in this study. Using interviews, a demographic questionnaire, and observations provided the data sources needed for data analysis and the triangulation and validity of the study. Documenting the process of thematic development and displaying the process of category development also increased the trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter 4

Findings: How Individuals Approach the Nine Developmental Tasks

Introduction

This chapter is organized to answer my first research question: How does each individual of the couple demonstrate approaching the nine tasks that contribute to long-term marriage? This chapter begins with a brief explanation and description of each couple (together and as individuals) developed from both survey and observation data. Each individual is described to give the reader some background and important descriptors to help identify and differentiate between the six couples and/or 12 individuals, and to assist in contextualizing the analysis that is presented. The findings that answer the first research question will then be discussed.

The findings presented in this chapter are based on three sources of data: the interviews; observations taken before, during and after the interviews; and a brief survey given to each of the 12 participants. A complete description of the data collection procedures can be found in Chapter 3. In order to maintain confidentiality, the names of the participants have been changed to a coding system described as follows. The first couple is known as couple 1 and a W or H is placed after the couple's identifying number to indicate wife or husband. The next couple is couple 2 W/H and so on for all six couples. Individuals are referred to as 1-6/W or H. For example, the husband of couple one is called 1-H.

Description of the Participants

Six couples were interviewed for this research. I interviewed each individual of the couple for approximately one hour and followed the same interview protocol for each

participant. Observations were made at various times during the field work phase of this study. A brief demographic survey was also completed by each individual. From all of these data, the following descriptions were created.

Couple 1

The first couple has been married for 36 years. Both are white, and currently in their first marriage. They were married in 1970 and have two children. I was able to have dinner and breakfast with this couple on two different occasions and was able to make a variety of observations. The couple was often in the same room but doing separate activities, such as one reading while the other was watching television. The husband would often make jokes and laugh out loud while the wife would only smile and kind of shake her head. Both appeared to be very relaxed in their house. It was clean, but obviously lived in with newspapers and a variety of scattered magazines on the floor. Interactions between the couple were always polite and friendly although they only talked when one had something to say, there was no conversation to fill the silence. They were comfortable and at ease with each other and also had a good sense of respect for the other's privacy.

1-H

The husband in couple one is 59 years old and an engineer by profession. He has searching eyes, a somewhat long, yet trimmed, beard and stands about 5'10''. He has salt and pepper hair that had recently been cut. He often looked to be deep in thought and smiled and laughed a lot before, during, and after the interview. He was patient with his answers and seemed very confident in what he had to say. A self described private person, he does not open up easily or often, even to his wife. The husband was wearing

relaxed work clothes and was working on his project car in the garage when I arrived for the interview. The husband was interviewed first and his wife was out of the house during the course of the interview.

1-W

The wife in couple one is 56 years old, is a house-wife, and currently a historian for a local historical home in a nearby town. She often had a smile on her face as if she knew what I was going to say or ask before I did. She looks very young for her age and stood just a few inches shorter (5'8'') than her husband. Her smile was a knowing smile and her demeanor was calm, patient, and appeared very confident. Eye contact was established and maintained throughout the interview except for moments where she looked up or away to recall a distant memory or example. She laughed a few times during the interview and always seemed relaxed. She described herself as shy and an introvert. She was dressed in relaxed clothes that she enjoyed wearing around the house, or while working in her garden. The wife was interviewed while her husband was outside working around the house.

Couple 2

Couple two has been married for 43 years. Both are white and this is their first marriage. They were married in 1963 and do not have any children. I was able to spend a long weekend with this couple and was able to observe their daily life. The couple often was in the same room with one another and the wife often would get things for her husband who is currently recovering from surgery. This couple was very relaxed and dressed casually enjoying their retirement. The television was almost constantly on, but neither really seemed to take any interest in what was on until the evening shows. The

television almost acted as a clock where they knew what time it was by what show was currently airing. The couple often passed interesting articles from the newspaper back and forth and laughed about certain jokes or quips they would make toward each other. They often smiled at each other and said “please” and “thank you” when one did something for the other.

2-H

The husband in couple two is 65 years old and a retired biology/zoology professor at a local college. He has been recovering from kidney surgery and complications resulting from this surgery for the past four years. He is very patient and funny, making jokes with his wife and guests. He claims that he only cares about a few things, and truly does not sweat the small stuff; a new perspective gained from his surgery and dealing with the complications from it. He appeared to be very open and honest with all of his answers and often made direct eye contact for emphasis. He enjoyed being able to discuss his past and how much his wife has and does mean to him. The husband was interviewed first and then his wife.

2-W

The wife in couple two is 66 years old and was very eager to share her experience of being married. She was easy going and in very relaxed clothes (sweat pants and sweat shirt) and often smiled and laughed during the interview. She would look up and away when thinking back on her marriage and often smiled to herself about certain memories before sharing them with me. She was open about what she did not like about the interview, mostly the word “tasks,” but also admitted to not knowing what other word she would prefer to use. The interview for both of these individuals took place in their living

room while the other was in the television room and was unable to hear what was being discussed.

Couple 3

Couple three has been married for 30 years. Both are white and in their first marriage. This couple was married in 1975 and has three children. I spent three weekends with this couple and was able to observe them in a variety of settings both at home and in public. The couple often yells or, at the very least talks in very loud voices to each other and everyone else in the house. The wife's parents were currently living with them as well as their oldest daughter and her husband. The house was large enough to accommodate the extended family, but the noise level was always high, and there did not seem to be a lot of privacy for anyone. The couple described themselves as "lovingly antagonizing," both to each other and other members of the family. This couple often interrupted each other and those around them when talking. They were not a very "touchy-feely" kind of family and hugs were not very common. That said, both members of the couple were very supportive of each other by fixing food the other wanted, and making sure they had a drink, or snack, or a place to sit. Both the husband and wife are very blunt with each other and with everyone else. They are not rude, just to the point.

3-H

The husband is 54 years old and currently works as an accountant. He traveled a lot in his early years with his company but does not do as much traveling now. He is the primary income earner for the family and enjoys that role. He claims he is "matter-a-fact" and has an attitude that reflects his personal belief that "it is the way it is." The husband of this couple likes to joke and is not that serious about much, but at times

comes across as a bit deeper and more serious than he admits. He was dressed in business casual clothes and maintained almost constant eye contact through the entire interview. His answers were honest but he often questioned if he "was saying the right thing" or "did he pass" the interview (this was done in a joking manner, as well).

3-W

The wife in couple three is 53 years old and works as a stay-at-home mom. She is very talkative and often would stray off task or become preoccupied with other happenings in the room or around her. She stated she had a difficult time remembering bad or stressful times in her marriage. Most of her answers and attitude about her marriage or even life in general felt like "that is just the way it is, was, or should be." She was not able to explain how her marriage has lasted or works other than to say, "it just does." She seemed very uptight, as if she needed to vent. Part of this, she admitted, was due to having her parents live with them and because of the holiday season. She was very appreciative and fiercely supportive of her husband. She was well dressed, in comfortable, yet stylish clothing and laughed a lot during the interview.

Couple 4

Couple four has been married for 27 years. Both members of this couple are white and are in their first marriage. They have one child. They were married in 1979. I was able to observe this couple when the husband came to his wife's work for the interview. Both interviews were conducted at the wife's place of employment (a local college). The couple was not outwardly affectionate in terms of physical touch, but it was very obvious that they cared for one another. When they spoke to each other it was as if nobody else in the room mattered. They watched and listened to the other person's

eyes, posture, and tone. I felt as if I could see a connection between the two even when they were not talking to each other. The couple even described themselves as "soul-mates" and they certainly looked and played the part when they were together. The impression I received was that their love was continuously growing.

4-H

The husband in couple four is 61 years old and works as an engineer. He looks very fit and was dressed in business casual clothes. He had very thoughtful eyes that had a hint of mischief around them, as if he was looking for a joke to play or tell. The husband was very open and forthcoming with answers and examples pertaining to his marriage. He had moments of silence and reflection that were not excessively long, but fit with his personality. He used the term "soul-mate" and spoke about his wife with a lot of respect and admiration. I was very impressed with how much he respected and loved his wife even though I was around him for only a brief time. The interview felt very safe and comfortable with a lot of positive energy and optimism.

4-W

The wife in couple four is 54 years old and works with students at a local college. She was professionally dressed and has a warm and inviting smile. She did not laugh a lot during the interview, but her smile was almost always present. Her speech was very eloquent, and polite, and her voice was confident when she spoke. Her attitude about marriage was that of being highly independent in her life and job, yet extremely comforted and complimented in her marriage. She is career oriented and forward thinking. She portrayed her marriage as a very nice, safe, and secure haven away from the rest of the world. She is private and reserved to a certain degree. I felt like I was able

to get a good understanding of her marriage, but I knew that I was only allowed a certain degree of exposure to her marriage.

Couple 5

Couple five has been married for 32 years. Both individuals in this couple are white and in their first marriage. They were married in 1974 and have two children. I was only able to briefly observe this couple for a few hours. They were polite and civil to each other, yet seemed distant. Both were able to discuss certain events back and forth, but the husband seemed to pay little attention or be in another world while his wife was talking. She often would ask him questions, and he would look startled; however, this behavior seemed almost normal for both of them. This couple commented on enjoying their space and personal time but also sharing time by being in the same room even if they were not talking directly to each other. There was a very common bond of enjoying the company of their dog who seemed to be the center of attention, as well as the true boss of the house.

5-H

The husband in couple five is 56 years old and works for an insurance company. He is very polite and speaks in a deliberate, well-paced tone. He describes his background as ridged and structured and claims he has had to learn how to loosen-up and relax some. He also gives his wife a lot of credit in helping him learn that not everyone shares his same mindset or background and feels as though he is constantly learning new things in life and in his marriage. This interview took place in their home which was very posh and well decorated. The husband admitted to having rough spots in his marriage, but it was very apparent that he loves his wife and feels a very strong bond with

her. Most of his answers came with ease. He was not laid back, but relaxed and comfortable through the whole interview.

5-W

The wife in couple five is 56 years old and is a professor at a local college. She is very nice and polite as well as straight to the point. She has a blunt, no-nonsense kind of attitude which is very refreshing. One gets the feeling that you would not want to be on her bad side. She was well dressed and I interviewed her in her office at the college. Her answers lead me to believe she was very honest about the marriage because she admitted it was not easy and that she had considered getting a divorce. She felt that it was not until the last seven years or so that she and her husband started working on the tasks I asked about during the interview. She felt that her friendship with her spouse and other people, as well as her kids, helped her get through the rough spots in her marriage. She was very good at maintaining eye contact and appeared to be very trustworthy. She often laughed and even sighed some about how difficult parts of her marriage have been, but she seemed to take it all in stride.

Couple 6

Couple six has been married for 34 years. Both individuals are white. This is the wife's first marriage, but the husband's second marriage. The husband was in a previous marriage for approximately nine years. This couple was married in 1972 and they have two children. I was able to observe this couple over three extended weekends. The couple is very active and fun to be around. They often made lots of jokes and were constantly offering me food or something to drink. The wife is very upbeat and always seems to be busy doing something like folding laundry, baking, reading a book, or

cleaning. The husband is much more laid back and seems to enjoy working outside and reading in a quiet corner. Their interactions are often filled with jokes, typically initiated by the husband. He seems to make light of or even fun of his wife in a very nice way that makes them both laugh at times. The wife often talked about upcoming events and plans the couple had to do that day or the next while the husband would nod, or roll his eyes but never in a disrespectful way. Out in public the couple held hands and seemed to genuinely enjoy being with each other.

6-H

The husband in couple six is 64 years old and a retired biologist who currently teaches part-time at a local community college. He has some graying hair and very serious, intense eyes. His answers were very thoughtful and somewhat philosophical in nature. He enjoyed using the phrase "this, that, or the other" in his examples. He came across as very introverted and difficult to assess from an emotional standpoint. It seemed as if logic and scientific reasoning formed the basis of his responses rather than emotion or feelings. He was very deliberate in his answers, coming across as highly intelligent and at times a bit hard to follow in his answers.

6-W

The wife in couple six is 61 years old and a school teacher by profession. She is small and has a very bubbly personality. She was dressed casually and looked very comfortable during the interview. She spoke clearly and articulately as one might expect from a teacher and had searching and kind eyes. She laughed and was often reflective in her answers making sure she was clear in what she was attempting to say. Her eye contact was very good and it broke on occasions when she thought about past events or

examples that were not on the tip of her tongue. She did not make a lot of jokes, but did laugh some, and came across as open and honest. She describes herself as an accommodator and a pretty happy person.

Summary

Table 4 is offered as a summary of the 12 respondents who participated in this study. Additionally, readers can use it as a quick reference to help contextualize the interview data that are presented in this and the next chapter.

Research Question 1: How Does Each Individual of the Couple Demonstrate Approaching the Nine Tasks that Contribute to Long-Term Marriage?

The nine tasks developed by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) are analyzed one at a time in this section. For each task, themes constructed from the data are reported and analyzed.

Table 4

Chart of Participants

Participant	Year Married	Number of Years Married	Age When Married	Current Age	Number of Children	Profession
1-H	1970	36	23	59	2	Engineer
1-W	1970	36	20	56	2	Stay at home mom and Historian
2-H	1963	43	21	65	0	Professor
2-W	1963	43	23	66	0	Public School Teacher
3-H	1975	31	23	54	3	Accountant
3-W	1975	31	22	53	3	Stay at home mom
4-H	1979	27	33	61	1	Engineer
4-W	1979	27	27	54	1	University Director
5-H	1974	32	24	56	2	Insurance
5-W	1974	32	24	56	2	Professor
6-H	1972	34	30	64	2	Biologist
6-W	1972	34	27	61	2	Stay at home mom and Teacher

Task I – Separating from the Family of Origin

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) noted that this task requires a couple to separate psychologically from their family of origin. The emotional ties and family roles that many people grow up with need to be shifted and created anew within the marriage. The couple begins to rely on their own judgment to make decisions regarding the marriage.

From the data collected from the six couples, two themes were developed that help to understand how each individual of the couple separated from their family of origin. These themes include: (1) the degree of difficulty involved in separating, and (2) developing a new family identity.

The first theme, the degree of difficulty is further divided into two components. The first component, based on part of this study's sample, characterized participants as having a difficult time in separating from their family of origin due to a sense of superiority and/or a sense of guilt. The second component based on the majority of the participant's responses, involved individuals who did not have a difficult time separating from their family of origin. This second component is divided into two categories, including having already separated from their family and the impact of physical distance on separation for the family of origin.

The second theme, developing a new family identity, is subdivided into two components. The first component involves how each individual created a new family identity by becoming independent. The second component focuses on how a family identity was created through the blending of old and new family values and traditions.

Theme 1 — Degree of Difficulty in Separating from the Family of Origin

The first theme was the degree of difficulty an individual had with separating from his/her family of origin. This theme was divided into two components: (1) those individuals who had difficulty in separating from their family of origin, and (2) those individuals who did not have difficulty separating from their family of origin.

Difficulty in Separating from Family of Origin

A small group (4 of 12) of the participants in this study noted that they had difficulty in separating from the family of origin. Two reasons were offered: (1) a sense of superiority, and (2) a sense of guilt.

Sense of Superiority

Having a sense of superiority occurred when one member of the couple felt that his/her family's way of doing things was better than his/her spouses. 6-W commented:

> It [6-H's family's way of doing things] was just diametrically different from mine, and, of course, I thought mine [family] was the best and better, and it was really hard for me to learn that what I found over time was that no family is perfect.

Another take on this, is when a member of the couple felt that his/her spouse had a sense of their family being superior. 5-W commented on how her husband felt his family was better and therefore had a more difficult time separating from them:

> So, I think he had a more difficult time because I think — well, he did. He thought I was the one that was weird. He'd always say, "Oh, you're living in a fantasy land," and stuff. And now he realizes it was his family that was so screwed up. So I think it was more difficult for him than for me.

Sense of Guilt

Another reason for some individuals (3 of 12) having a hard time separating from their family of origin was that they had a degree of guilt or loyalty to their family. This

guilt was overcome, but it made separating initially more difficult for them than for others. In cases where there was guilt, it came more from the individual than from the family itself. 2-H commented:

> So, you try to make your own identity. But it's hard to do because you have loyalty and guilt. It's like going to school. Every mother wants her son to be a doctor. I tried pre-med for awhile and then I looked at what doctors do and said, 'I don't want to do this." I could have gone home and managed the land that we had. But I didn't want to do that. You always try to do what you want to, and sometimes you can't. You always try to go your own separate way. So that's what we did. Gradually they accepted it, and actually became pretty proud that we were doing this.

2-W also had a degree of guilt in trying to make sure she and her husband were able to spend equal time visiting both sets of parents. She stated:

> We did have a difficult time early on; trying to make sure we visited his parents and my parents equally. That got to be such a chore until we said, "Hey, we don't need this. We are just going to quit obsessing about it." So we sort of relaxed a little bit and just did what we could.

Couple 2 was unique because they were the only couple without children. This also added to the guilt both said, because they were not able to use the children as a reason to not visit. They both felt that families with children have an easier time establishing their own family and not feeling as guilty for not visiting their parents because they can use their own family as an excuse or reason. 6-H had another experience of guilt when separating:

> But now I have different responsibilities, and that created interesting tensions of how — feeling a little guilty, not spending enough time with mom and dad doing the family stuff, and sort of feeling a little guilty about being selfish. So that was a maturation process. And probably the biggest realization was that a lot of these fears and things that I put on my parents, thinking that they wanted this, that the other, never even dawned on them. It was mostly my imagination rather than a real need that they had to have me there.

No Difficulty in Separating from Family of Origin

Although there were some examples and discussion among the participants about the difficulty of separating from their family of origin, overwhelmingly most participants (8 of 12) commented that separating was relatively easy and straightforward. The two primary reasons for this were: (1) some individuals had already established their own lives and separated from their family prior to getting married, and (2) physical distance played a large role.

Already Separated From Family of Origin

The majority of participants (7 of 12) commented that their ability to separate was straightforward once they were married because they had already separated from their family of origin prior to marriage. Many of these individuals (6 of 12) were self-sufficient and did not need the support (financial, emotional, etc.) of their family as much as others. A variety of different reasons support this conclusion. For example, 1-H commented:

> My family wasn't a real close-knit one. Her family was much closer than my family. She probably had much more difficulty separating than I did. It wasn't a big deal for me.

6-H also theorized that not having as close a family as others made it easier to separate from his family:

> And then, the other aspect of it was my family was a lot more closed, and so it wasn't as inviting. And I'm sure if the distances were reversed I don't think we would have been that close to my family. Her family is a lot more open and more inviting.

Another example on the ease of separating was when an individual decided there were certain aspects of their family of origin that they did not want to be apart of, or things

they wanted to change. 4-H commented:

> Racism with my brother was pretty overt. But with my parents, it was more of an underlying element of their background. That old Southern tradition I grew up with where there were white water fountains and it was a heavily segregated environment. So one of the first things I wanted to make clear to my family is that I've moved on from that.

4-W also separated from her family prior to marriage, but not to get away from some aspect of her family that she did not like. It was a strong desire for independence. She commented:

> Everyone always left after high school. Occasionally, some would come back in the summer to work. But that wasn't a typical kind of thing. So once I left at eighteen, I never really did go back for any long period of time. That was really the separation from my family.

2-W also felt like she had moved on from her family and was on her own before she even got married so it was not a difficult transition. She stated:

> 2-H and I had been on our own, so to speak, with either jobs or school, or both, for a very long time. It didn't mean that my family wasn't important. But as far as being separated from them by being married, that really never entered into the picture very much.

Role of Physical Distance

Another factor that 9 of the 12 respondents discussed about separating from their family of origin involved physical distance. Distance played a factor in a number of ways. First, being far away from their families forced some individuals to separate earlier (prior to marriage) from their family of origin. Secondly, others (3 of 12) were physically close to one or both families which presented a different kind of challenge. Those individuals who moved away from their families did so for a variety of reasons, but the common aspect for all of them was that physical distance helped them separate from their families of origin. 1-H explained:

> 1-H: We moved away. Neither one of us stayed in the town in which our families were. We would visit. We didn't visit a lot. We did on the holidays and occasionally on the weekends. The main thing was not being in the same town.

6-H had a similar response to ways he was able to separate from his family:

> Well, part of it was the sheer distance. My family was farther away and, therefore, the distance aspect of it savored- if that's the right term; just made seeing her family more convenient from that standpoint.

4-W offered a different take on the role distance played in her separation:

> There were times where I wish that we did have a closer family. But a lot of it was based on distance. When it comes right down to it, distance and lack of money to do a lot of travel.

For those individuals who were physically distant from their parents it played a large part in their ability to separate from their family of origin.

There was also a group of participants (3 of 12) that were physically close to their parents and had either a difficult or easy experience in separating as a result of the close distance to their families. The husband and wife in couple 2 both described the early years of their marriage and the difficulty of establishing their own family identity based on distance. 2-W commented:

> Early on when we lived in South Dakota, that was probably the hardest because we were gone for a couple of years without seeing our parents. But, I guess, as far as being separated from family, the distance was probably the hardest part.

Her husband (2-H) had a different take, explaining how being physically close to home was more difficult:

> But when we first got married, we lived very close to them [his parents]. Each one of them wants you to come home on the weekend. It became important to them because it was still their son or their daughter. So it took awhile to establish our own [identity].

Couple 3, on the other hand, described their physical closeness to their families as more

of a blessing and not a major factor in the creation of their own, new, family identity. 3-H commented:

> I guess we looked at ourselves as independent. So I don't think we had the pressures of our parents butting in. Both 3-W and I lived within ten to fifteen miles from where we were born and raised so our parents were near by. But they were certainly not intrusive.

The wife of couple three agreed that being close to home was not a problem. If anything, it was more of a blending of both families. 3-W commented about separating from her family of origin:

> But we didn't because we did so many things with the family because we lived only a couple of exits apart on the Parkway. We were lucky because we only lived ten minutes apart from the families. We didn't really have to separate the family. We still include the family. The families are very close.

Summary

The first theme discussed the level of difficulty participants in this study had in separating from their family of origin. Those individuals who had difficulty in separating did so because of a sense of superiority or a sense of guilt. The other individuals did not experience a difficult time in separating, because they had already separated prior to marriage, and/or they had physically moved away from their family.

Theme #2 — Development of a New Family Identity

The second theme of separating from one's family of origin was how the individual developed a new family identity. Two elements make up how each individual created a new family identity: (1) at some point a decision was reached to be independent from their family of origin, and (2) there was also a blending of old family values and traditions with new ones.

Becoming Independent

However a family was described, each individual recognized that he/she came from a different family and therefore brought a different background and viewpoint to the marriage. Each participant in this study had something to say about deciding to start his/her family and become independent. 1-W said:

> There came to be a point where we had to decide our kids and our family was the family at that point. Mom and dad could come and join us and do what we were doing, but it was our life now and not theirs.

Her spouse (1-H) had a similar view when he stated:

> I am a part of my family; 1-W is a part of her family. That's our origins. When you are married, you simply have to form your own center away from that and separate yourself from your formal.

4-H felt that remembering one's family of origin when creating their new family is very important:

> That previous life is what shaped you initially. It's at the root at a lot of your core identity. It's important not to completely turn your back on that. But it's also important to know that in order to maintain what's important to you in your marriage would suffer more if you didn't say no to those things that pull at you from your past.

By being able to remember and incorporate certain aspects of their heritage into their new family, they were creating a new and, in some cases, better family as well. 4-H seemed very determined to make sure his new family did not have the same views and traditions as his family of origin.

6-H was very good at explaining how the family of origin affects the new family identity, but should not be allowed to dominate it. He noted:

> And you still maintain a closeness; it's still family, and you both have to respect the tie that you as an individual have to your family. You can't break that tie, but

> you also have to respect each other's ties to the families. But you can't subsume your own family to either one of the others. You have to be independent.

In other words, you need to remember and understand where you came from to make sure you are both true to yourself and to your future family. Along with the idea of independence and creating a new identity, 3-H felt that this was a natural progression. He commented:

> I don't think it was really all that important or difficult, at least not for me because it's natural growth. It's a natural progression in life. You grow up. After you do get married, you have kids, you go away and you start your own family. You start to set your own traditions.

Blending of Old and New Family Values and Traditions

Each participant described a kind of blending of their families. Some (4 of 12) discussed how there were three families: the family they came from, the family the spouse came from, and the new family they were creating. Others (3 of 12) described it as having a foot in each family, one in their family of origin, and one in their new family. The idea of mixing the families is very apparent with 3-W:

> We didn't really have to separate the family. We were very eager to spend Christmas Eve with my family, Christmas Day with his family.

Mixing of holiday traditions or even splitting time between families was also very common. All of the couples mentioned how they initially felt torn between which family to spend the holidays with, or spending the time at home. 2-W stated:

> For example, we would tell his folks, we'll be at your house for Thanksgiving, but we are going to be at my house for Christmas.

Sometimes attempting to blend the families or make each family of origin happy resulted in the start of a new tradition. 5-W recalled:

> And I can remember I think it was our first Christmas, went to Chicago and it's a three and a half- well, it's probably about a four hour drive back with the time change. And so, we'd left really early, tried to get through all the snow to get to his families house, finally got there and they'd already eaten dinner and opened all their presents. And I thought screw you. You know, I mean, there's just no sense of, you know, waiting, or sharing, or things like that. So, it wasn't difficult to establish our own tradition.

6-W also identified with establishing her own traditions in her family. She stated:

> So, basically we ended up establishing our own [traditions]. It was easier to just fall back on ourselves, and we did that more and more, and it just became easier with time. It just became much easier.

Each of the individuals who participated in this study had to make a decision that their new family was going to be their primary focus and new family identity. Remembering where you came from and allowing certain aspects of that previous identity to influence your new family was important. Some individuals (3 of 12) had a clear understanding that their new family was their new identity, others (5 of 12) felt that blending the two worked for them. The same was true for how the couple created a new family identity. Some traditions were maintained by splitting time over the holidays with certain families. Others decided it was easier to create or develop their own.

Conclusion for Task 1

In regards to task number one, all individuals were successful at separating from their family of origin and creating a new family identity. Some individuals found this task challenging because of a sense of superiority and guilt. Other individuals did not struggle with separating from their family of origin. The reasons for this were they had already separated prior to their marriage, and/or had physically moved away from their family. The second theme centered on individuals who had a sense of independence and a mixing of both old and new family values and traditions. Once the individual decided

to focus on and recognize his/her new family identity, the task no longer presented a challenge for the individuals. The new identity helped the individuals move forward in their marriage. Every couple was able to establish some sense of independence from their family and developed a new sense of family identity.

Task II – Building Togetherness, Intimacy, and Autonomy

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) described building togetherness, intimacy, and autonomy as the couple starting to share a vision of how they want to spend their lives and remaining committed to one another. They move from the "I" stage of adulthood (I want this, I want that) to the "we" stage of marriage. This task involves balancing what is best for you, your spouse, and the marriage.

Ten of the 12 participants offered response to questions related to this task that focused on the change from "I" to "we." Each individual was able to identify certain aspects of his/her life that remained "I" focused and also how marriage created a sense of "we" as well. There were four main themes that the individuals demonstrated for this task: (1) having common interests, (2) balancing the "I" and "we" aspects of each individual's life, (3) supporting their spouses "I" needs and wants, and (4) achieving this task in a marriage.

Theme 1 — Common Interests

Sharing common interests was something every individual said helped build togetherness with their spouse. The interests themselves varied from couple to couple and even individual to individual. Two aspects of common interests the individuals discussed were: (1) sharing in similar activities, and (2) having the same views and thoughts on the same subjects, topics, or issues.

Sharing Similar Activities

Sharing in similar activities was one way that the individuals in this study mentioned building togetherness, intimacy, and autonomy. This particular component describes the variety of activities many of the participants enjoy sharing with their spouse.

6-H named a few specific common activities he shared with his spouse:

> Well there are things that we do together, like hiking, getting out, getting together with people; working together on projects; doing things around the house; those kinds of things.

5-W commented on some of the activities that she and her husband enjoyed such as:

> We'll go biking, and going to the mountains hiking, and then just visiting some of the spots around the area has been fun.

Finally 1-H shared these common activities:

> We worked with the youth when our boys were just little babies. We got involved in singing groups. Buying a house, and working on the house together. Working on the yard; taking vacations.

Sharing the Same Views and Thoughts

Sometimes common interests were not necessarily what they did in terms of activities, but what they talked about and how their viewpoints matched up. 2-H commented, "…education, politics, point of view about the region, we're pretty much the same." 2-W also agreed that she can talk about anything with her husband:

> Just, being able to talk things through, whatever you want to know even if it's stupid. I can ask 2-H anything. He'll tell me if it's a dumb question or not. We usually see eye to eye on things, not all the time, but most of the time. We often have the same view on most issues, be it politics, or schools or what not.

6-W described how her viewpoints often matched her spouse:

> When I'm around him I'm comfortable. It's a fit. I understand what he likes and wants and he knows the same for me. We have the same interests. One thing I love is since we're both biologists. It was interesting in that we never have a lack of something to discuss, never. He's talking about something new and interesting everyday and I'm finding it to be just a neat as he does.

The participants in this study commented in some way that having common interests gave them a way to do things with their spouse and provided points of interest for discussion that ultimately helped them build togetherness.

Theme 2 — Balancing the "I" with the "We"

The next theme involved balancing the "I" with the "we" in a marriage. This involved a couple understanding there is a time for being a couple, and also time for being individuals. How much time and space or autonomy, each person needed to themselves apart from the relationship depended on each individual's own needs, wants, and personality. What was noticeable were two things: (1) how the individuals recognized they had to maintain the focus on some of their "I" wants for the benefit of the marriage and (2) how over time, they were able to shift from "I" to "we" back to "I" as their relationship progressed.

Keeping Some "I" Wants in the Marriage

Four of the 12 individuals felt that keeping time for the "I" was just as important as the "we." One reason offered by participants in this study was that it became a matter of keeping your own identity. 6-W explained:

> …it's very important to maintain your own sense of identity and not let it be usurped by your partner. You have to be able to stand up for yourself. You have to be able to think for yourself. It's like, you both walk independently. You're walking maybe in the same direction, but you're both walking independently.

5-W offered a similar view on maintaining the "I" aspect of her identity:

> The 'I' is still very much there. Because that's what the relationship, the marriage, is much based on, the fact that we can bring those two things together in the same, caring relationship.

Finally, 3-H offered:

> But you also have to allow space where a person may want to do something that they want to do and you don't. You have to give them the space to do it. I go golfing and she doesn't. She goes shopping and I don't. We still have things we do together, but it doesn't have to be everything.

These quotes highlight how keeping some sense of who you are as an individual and where you came from is important in moving forward in the relationship.

Shifting from "I" to "We" Then Back to "I"

Another development that three of the twelve participants discussed was a shift from "I" to "we" back to "I" over time in the marriage. 1-H offered an excellent explanation of this:

> I think maybe as you are younger you tend to do more of the 'we' things. My first thought is maybe that's what you did, and as you get older you get more comfortable with the 'we' part and you kind of go back to the 'me' a little bit because you are still and individual. A lot of things I put off early in the marriage, because we needed to think about other things… I had to put those things off because there were other more important things that we had to do… So then, as the family gets older and moves away, suddenly I am in a position that I am able to go do those things.

3-H was a bit more scientific in his explanation of shifting from "we" back to "I" when he said:

> I think you go through, almost like a bell-shaped curve. You go off and you build yourself together towards the 'we'. But as you get a little bit older and you start doing things over and over again you come to a point where you want a little bit more space. You find out that there are things that each of you lies to do together, but then there are things that you prefer not to do with each other…There is only so much togetherness that one could stand. It sounds horrible, but I think to appreciate togetherness, you have to appreciate loneliness.

Both quotes touch on the importance of balancing the "I" with the "we" in a marriage. In order to have a balance, each individual recognizes the importance of keeping a sense of his/her own identity, and realize that he/she is able to do things both individually and as a couple.

Theme 3 — Supporting the "I" Needs of Your Spouse

The next theme stresses the importance of supporting the "I" needs or the autonomy of one's spouse. The previous component highlighted how individuals need to maintain their sense of "I" and this theme attempts to show how individuals use the support to build togetherness, intimacy, and autonomy. By supporting the "I" needs of their spouse it often allowed individuals to pursue personal wants and goals that were often career related.

Career choices are often a large part of autonomy in a relationship. Having the support to follow a particular dream or career path was much easier with the support and understanding of a spouse. 4-W felt her spouse was very supportive in allowing her to pursue her career:

> I still could go to the next level. Even last night we had the discussion if I wanted to do that I would need to change institutions. I've been lucky to have the career advancement that I've had. So if I really wanted to go to that VP position, I would need to change. He said, 'Well, I would be open to that. I'm going into phase retirement.'

Both individuals of couple 5 also had an example of how being supportive of their spouse lead to an advancement in career. 5-W commented:

> …he was so used to from his family being not connected to anybody, that's what allowed me to pursue my doctorate… I got satisfaction out of my job, and my work, and my kids, and my education.

5-H said this about encouraging his spouse to do something he did not want to do, but did so to support his spouse's "I" need:

> I just had no desire to go on for my PhD. We both went to graduate school together to get our Master's and then she wanted to continue on, and I didn't. So we kind of took different paths there as far as our education went, but we always encouraged each other to continue on to do whatever we wanted to do, and when it came time for me to go up for promotions, she encouraged me to go for promotions.

By allowing and encouraging each individual to keep a sense of "I" in the marriage, new career paths and opportunities were made available. The husband and wives in the study did not have all of the same interests, or even desires for careers, but by supporting one another's individual wants, both members of the couple were able to benefit.

Theme 4 — How is the "We" Aspect Developed in a Marriage

The final theme of this task involves the "we" aspect of a marriage how occurs or is achieved. This theme was developed from asking each individual questions about how togetherness was achieved in their marriage. The answers varied, but there were some common elements across responses. The two common elements included: (1) it was achieved before the marriage while the couple was dating, and (2) this task became second nature and developed over time after marriage.

Togetherness, Intimacy, and Autonomy Achieved Prior to Marriage

Some of the participants (5 of 12) commented that the sense of building togetherness, intimacy, and autonomy was there early in the marriage. Part of it was due to knowing and understanding their spouse prior to getting married. 2-W explained:

> Because we dated for so long that we were kind of a 'we' before we were married. I don't remember it being a big adjustment.

2-H had a similar viewpoint because he felt they had been dating for so long, that being a "we" was not a problem and was there before they ever got married. 4-H offered a similar view:

> It was actually before we were married. We lived together for awhile. I think that was a very valuable time for us both.

4-W felt that the time they had finding out who they were as individuals first played and important role for when they came together. 4-W felt that once they started dating "it changed from I to we" and remained that way ever since.

Togetherness, Intimacy, and Autonomy — Second Nature & Developed Over Time

Another take on how this task was achieved was advanced by four of 12 participants who discussed the task as being "second nature" or as Lauer and Lauer (1986) termed it "attachment." Enough time had passed and the individual formed an instinct regarding what was going on with his/her spouse. 6-H shared:

> I think we've sort of reached that point evolving through the years. And we pretty much know what each of us wants to do, and when you leave me alone and all that, and pick up on the little idiosyncrasies.

6-W shared this instinct:

> I'm much more tuned in, or we're tuned in to each other more. He- I can anticipate what he would like to do, or things that he likes to enjoy doing, it's almost second nature.

For 1-W it was more of a learned process before it became instinctual:

> I had to find the middle ground. I had to learn what he needed and wanted. I had to learn to adjust the way I reacted and my personality to what he needed and wanted.

Whatever the case, for most of these individuals (9 of 12), with enough time, learning what their spouse wanted or needed, or when to be together or have time apart came

either with time, or was learned prior to getting married.

Conclusion of Task 2

The task of building togetherness, intimacy, and autonomy was demonstrated in four main themes. First, having common interests helped the individuals feel connected to their spouse and also gave them a common ground to share, talk, and grow in their relationship. Second, there was a strong need not only to keep a sense of autonomy, but also to balance the "I" and "we" of the relationship. With the passage of time, some individuals were able to do more of the "I" tasks while continuing the "we" aspect as well. Third, supporting the "I" needs of their spouses, or being supported by their spouse, allowed for many individuals to develop meaningful careers and career choices that benefited the couple as a whole. Fourth, togetherness, intimacy, and autonomy were developed prior to the marriage, or with the passing of time it became second nature to identify with what the other spouse needed.

Task III — Maintain Privacy While Becoming a Parent

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) described this task occurring when one partner in the marriage has to balance the relationship with their spouse and the relationship with children. This task looks at how a couple keeps time for themselves and their marriage as well as giving time and attention to their children.

The two themes of this task were: (1) dealing with how issues of privacy changed, and (2) finding new ways to maintain or keep some privacy apart from their children. This was achieved in a few different ways that are discussed in this section. Overall, the six couples in this study were able to find an effective means to handle this task.

Theme 1 — How Privacy Changed

With the birth of a child, a couple's privacy is going to be compromised. This change of privacy comes in a few different forms. Many individuals (6 of 12), felt that the children became the identity of the family. 6-H described it like this:

> But I think you kind of sort of develop a, what I would call a family, where now you have a larger sharing and you've got the kids now that are involved pretty much on a day-today basis.

4-H made the comment that their child joined in with the family from the start:

> It's like the three of us have been best friends ever since he was born. We did everything together.

Most of the parents did not have a problem with the children entering into the family. There was no real difference, in terms of feeling a loss of privacy, between those couples who had a stay at home parent and those couples where both spouses worked.

Some individuals (3 of 12) felt that they lost some privacy in relationships was from intimacy with their spouse. Children make it much more difficult for the adults to have the same amount of time for themselves and often intimacy between the two will declined. 1-H felt that although he lost some intimacy with his spouse, he gained a new intimacy with his family. He stated:

> To some extent, your intimacy suffers with having children. But to some extent, having children brings intimacy into the relationship; because this is a part of both you and that's kind of an intimate thing, to raise children. It's kind of a different kind of intimacy.

5-H felt that it was just a matter of balancing and finding the time. He commented:

> As far as the privacy and the intimacy, that's a very, very difficult thing to do, and you just have to take advantage of it when you have the time.

His spouse agreed (5-W) when she commented:

> But as far as intimacy between the two of us, no… I guess, the intimacy would have been involved with doing things with the kids, I guess, and then maybe just talking about it, that sort of thing.

Even though intimacy between spouses has some decline, it often was replaced with more family intimacy.

Theme 2 — How to Keep Some Privacy

This brings up the second theme of how the individuals were able to keep some privacy, apart from their children. A few elements were involved in maintaining a level of privacy: (1) individuals shared in the responsibilities of raising the children to give each other space and time alone, (2) there was a strong emphasis on not loosing focus on their spouse or their needs, and (3) boundaries and rules were set in place to keep the children somewhat separate from the adults.

Sharing Responsibilities

Sharing the responsibilities with a child was very important to keep a sense of privacy. Sometimes it involved who would watch the children. 3-W explained:

> Up until midnight, if anybody cried he took care of it. Then midnight until whenever he woke up, it was my job because I didn't have to get up in the morning.

5-W also felt that having her husband assist made a huge difference in keeping some of her privacy:

> But we were able to get through it I think because he was willing to chip in and help out with the kids.

1-W also described how having her husband share in the responsibility of taking care of the kids helped her maintain some privacy:

> When 1-H came home, what I wanted was free time. Let him take care of the kid and give me some time to myself.

Keeping the Focus on the Marriage

Along with sharing in the responsibility of raising a child comes a strong commitment to keeping the focus on the marriage and what each spouse needed. For 4-W, understanding the need of both herself and her spouse to have a lot of privacy played a role in how many children they would have. She explained:

> That's why we decided on one child. We both realized very early on that we were not the kind of people, because of the need for that solitude. One was all we could handle. Probably the decision to have one gave us that privacy.

4-H agreed that only having one child helped with their privacy. He felt:

> Giving him [their child] privacy was probably more of a challenge than maintaining our privacy.

Each individual of couple 1, 3 and 6 made reference to not letting their children dictate their lives. 6-H described this as "not winding-up married to the kids" and his wife (6-W) agreed stating:

> I think a lot of times too much emphasis is put on the children, and not enough emphasis is put on the relationship. The children are a result of the relationship, and if the relationship is healthy, then the children will be healthy versus letting children dictate what's going on in the house.

All of the couples agreed that keeping a focus on the marriage was needed and sitting down to talk away from the kids or planning a date night were common ways for each individual to achieve this. 1-H said it best:

> …we recognized when, hey, we need some time. We need to go do something for ourselves.

Creating Boundaries and Rules

A final way that some privacy was maintained was by creating boundaries or rules in the household. Some individuals (4 of 12) set up times to talk when the kids

were not around. 4-H described when their child was away they could:

> Maintain a level of romance and intimacy that you just don't get with your child present all of the time. Plus, you could have grown-up discussions that you can't have when a child is around.

Other rules were more ridged in terms of where children were allowed to go or what parents would let their children do to maintain some privacy. 3-H had this rule:

> Each kid had their own room, we had our own room. We put the kids to bed, they would sleep, and then we had our time. We never had them sleep with us. They can jump in bed, talk, and giggle, but they never slept. Our room was downstairs and their rooms were upstairs.

For 6-W it was a similar kind of boundary. This involved having a safe place away from the kids. She explained:

> I made my bedroom off limits. We remodeled our house. I had a brand new bedroom and I decided I didn't want little fingerprints all over it, and so I made my bedroom off limits. And it was basically, I had my space. We had our space if we needed that, and that was just sort of a little thing, but it was that.

Couple 2 — The Couple Without Children

The only couple without children was couple 2. The both agreed that it was not something they did on purpose, but they just never had any kids. 2-H commented:

> It's not that we took precautions. We didn't. If we would have had a kid, fine. Since the years went by and we didn't have a kid, it didn't seem to make any difference.

2-W agreed:

> … we didn't do anything to prevent not having kids. Since we didn't have any, we weren't really disappointed.

Not having children allowed the couple to grow very close and also gave them the opportunity to travel frequently and spend a lot of time together. They never lost or had to worry about losing any privacy. The only observation that I could make was they did recently get a dog and that was, in a way, their child. 2-H had this to say about dogs versus a child:

> I had a five year old the other day in a restaurant that bugged the hell out of me, sitting behind me. Of course I didn't say anything, but my wife whispered to me during the meal, "Aren't you glad you have a dog instead of that kid?" I said, "Yeah."

2-W had this to say about their dog:

> I often say, since we've got the dog, as much as we've spoiled her, I say, "Husband, it's a good thing we didn't have kids. They wouldn't be worth shit, if what we've done to our dog is any indication of what we would've done to our child." I don't know, maybe you just don't miss what you've never had.

Conclusion for Task 3

The task of maintaining privacy, while becoming a parent focused on two themes. The first was to understand how privacy changes with the entry of a child into a marriage. This involved creating or a changing of identity where the kids become the family and family becomes the kids. Also, intimacy on a spousal level can decrease, but is replaced with intimacy on a family level. The second theme was each individual had to find a way to maintain some sense of privacy. This was accomplished by sharing the responsibility of raising the child. Some parents spent time with the kids so the other could be alone or recharge. There was a strong desire to maintain the focus on the marriage and not let the children dictate the flow of the relationship. Doing things like "date night" or making time for just being with one's spouse helped keep the balance between family time and privacy away from the kids. Finally, certain boundaries and rules were established where bedrooms were off-limits or kids were not allowed to sleep in their parents' bed. It is also important to note that there was not a large emphasis placed on the role of how sex changed between the couple with the birth of a child. This could be due to the age of the participants and the being interviewed years after the birth, rather than weeks or only a few years after the birth.

By keeping a sense of privacy with the coming of a child, each individual was able to balance their family, personal needs, and needs of their spouse. The one couple who did not have any children did not feel any real sense of regret, and felt that their dog certainly has provided a lot of love and entertainment.

Task IV — Confront and Master Crises of Life

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) described this task as broadly focused on difficult times in marriage. A crisis can be directly related to being married, or an event that is unrelated to the marriage itself, but still creates a hardship. The crisis can be long or short term, predicted or unpredicted. This task involves a couple understanding and acknowledging what and how they respond in a time of need or hardship.

This task had a broad range of answers. Many of the individuals (9 of 12) claimed they were lucky in that they have not had too many crises in their marriage or life at the time of the interview. They did predict what hardships might be on the horizon and these comments helped develop the first of two themes for this task: (1) the most common type of crises individuals have to face were usually health related involving themselves and/or their immediate family (e.g., deaths in their immediate families, personal health, and the health of their children); and (2) a crisis in marriage is confronted by the couple as a team effort rather than individually.

Theme 1 — Health Issues

Health issues were a big source of crisis in each individual's life or at least were considered as becoming a potential crisis in the future. There were three types of health crises that helped develop this theme: (1) health issues with an individual's family, (2) health issues with themselves or their spouse, and (3) health issues with their children.

Health was named more often as a crisis than anything else. Many individuals were not able to think of a crisis except for health issues or sickness in their family.

Family Health Issues

Although it is a natural progression for one's parents to get older and eventually die, this is a stressful time for the survivors. 4-W shared this:

> My family has faced three deaths of the immediate family from cancer in the last four years. That certainly is a crisis for me.

6-H also described losing parents as a crisis:

> You know, the biggest crises were sort of personal losses. When 6-W lost her father; when my mother died. Those were individual crises, and those go back to the family.

Every individual commented on either losing a parent or the spouse losing a parent as a crisis in their marriage. The crisis stems from not being sure what to do or where to go without that parent or family member around. 2-H described the loss:

> It's always tough when you lose a parent, and we've lost all four of them. You've known them for years, and then all of a sudden they aren't there. You think about questions you should have asked them; things you should have done. But, as they say, life moves on.

Spousal Health Issues

Another crisis involving health was that of a spouse becoming sick. This potential crisis was commented on as being something that many individuals (6 of 12) knew was going to happen or could happen now that they were getting older. 1-H explained like this:

> We've had to deal with sickness at times. We haven't had that much to deal with for ourselves as of yet, but I'm sure that's coming. As we get older, there are going to be health issues. We've been pretty lucky.

The idea of age playing a factor in health was also discussed by 2-W. She commented:

> It means more as you get older than it does when you are younger. Because when you get older, the health problems set in. That's hard. It's very, very difficult to know what to do and how to do it, to make things better. When you get right down to the bottom line, there's only a little bit that you can do. And that's very disappointing to find out that you can't do more when somebody's ill. There is not a whole lot that your spouse can do about it other than to just give them sympathy.

Many of the individuals (6 of 12) described health as a crisis because there is very little one can do to prevent these kinds of events. Other crises that were individual finances and job loss. These types of crises were often characterized as not being a big deal because the individual and couple had options. With health, though, the loss of control makes it difficult and turns it into a crisis.

Children's Health Issues

The final health type of crisis involved the child or children. While individuals (10 of 12) understood that they had or might have some health problems in the future, the bigger crisis involved the health of their children. Once again the feeling of being unable to control or "fix" what was wrong created a lot of stress and anxiety. 5-W was afraid for her daughter and stated:

> Another example is when our daughter was first born she had seizures, which was awful. Well, as you can imagine, your newborn daughter — and we weren't sure what the problem was. We weren't sure if she was going to live, if she was going to die, what it was.

This was an extreme example. Other crises that were not on such a large scale involved broken bones or falls that resulted in trips to the emergency room. 3-W shared:

> When the kids got sick and hurt that was kind of traumatic. Our kids got injured playing sports, that was tough. Every once in a while we'd have a broken bone, or someone hurt that needed stitches so we would go to the emergency room. Usually that was not a big deal, but it caused some worry.

Theme 2 — Dealing with a Crisis as a Team

Dealing with the crisis at hand was a team effort according to the data collected in this study. In addition to providing support for each other, each individual learned how to deal with a crisis from not only his/her viewpoint, but also from the perspective of the spouse. For some individuals (3 of 12), it was easier to deal with a crisis on their own. For other participants in this study (4 of 12), it was a team effort that always considered the spouse in the process.

For some individuals (3 of 12), learning to deal with a crisis with their spouse took some time. It was a process that they learned about and changed to include their spouse because it was for the better. 5-H learned that once he was married his old way of dealing with a crisis needed to change. He commented:

> To me, when we first got married, I thought it was just something that you dealt with, and I didn't realize the emotional impact it had on her, and vice versa, I'm sure. But I was a very regimented person. It happened, deal with it, and go on to the next thing. Well, people are affected differently, and I would have gone with it, but in a marriage, I had to realize that, hey, it's not just me now and it's not my family, it's not my parents. It's us that have the problem.

6-H felt that age and trial and error helped him learn to better deal with a crisis. He stated:

> Well, I think now there's… today there's a little bit more empathy, more of an understanding and less ego involved. I can understand more of how you felt about…

Understanding not only the crisis but also how and why a person acts the way they do was a huge part in understanding how individuals approached this task.

Sometimes not all crises had to be worked on together. In some cases (4 of 12), the spouse knew or understood, but could not help other than being supportive. 3-H

explained this:

> At one point in my life I went through a severe bout of depression. That was something I addressed. It was too private for me to share, so I didn't. My wife knew about it. She understood it, but what could she do?

1-H also described himself as private and liking to take on a crisis alone, but realized the power of being a team or at least letting his spouse know. His feelings on the matter were:

> I tend to keep a lot of stuff to myself. But in times when you have a crisis, and you talk about it, the closeness in a marriage gives you a support system for getting through those types of things.

Other individuals (4 of 12), claimed to always follow a team approach to a crisis. Not only do they provide support to each other, but there is also little blame issued. The individual realizes the power of the couple and works together. 4-W said:

> It's talking. It's sharing. You can't keep a crisis from the other person. I think the strategy we use a lot is to create a plan. What is the crisis and then what is the plan? What are we going to do? How can we manage it?

For 6-H, it was the most straightforward approach to take:

> Whenever something came up, financial, school wise, job wise, career wise, and all that, it was just a matter of just talking about it and saying, ok, well what are we gonna do about it, rather than point fingers… So it was more with the intent of solving a problem than looking at it as a crisis.

Taking a team approach was also good for the individual's peace of mind. Having that support or person in your corner made dealing with the crisis much easier. Words like comfort, support, and willing to help were all used to describe how a spouse responds or responded during a crisis. 2-W described this in the context of dealing with aging parents:

> I took care of my mom and dad. My husband supported me whenever I needed to go, whatever I needed to do. He was always willing. He didn't think I was

> annoying him in order to take care of them. We was willing to go with me when I wanted him to.

It was not that an individual had to do something during a time of crisis. Being on the same side as their spouse, or just being there, made a huge difference.

Conclusion for Task 4

Individuals approached confronting and mastering crises of life from a variety of standpoints. Two main themes were developed in conjunction with this task. First, the issue of health as a major source of crisis was evident in the data in one of three main forms: (1) the health of extended family, (2) the health of the individual and/or their spouse, and (3) the health of the children. Health was the one crisis that was so difficult because there was so little a person can or could do to really assist other than just being there. The second theme involved working as a team when confronted by a crisis. Some individuals had to learn and develop this approach. Others, had to confront the crisis on their own, but made sure their spouse understood there was nothing they could do to help. Finally, some couples, early in the marriage, took a team approach to a crisis and made sure they were able to support and comfort each other as well as tackle the problem.

Task V — Create a Safe Haven to Allow for Conflict

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) described this safe haven for conflicts by mentioning that a couple may often find that they do not agree on a particular topic and need an understanding that they can disagree with their spouse. It is important that the couple understand they can disagree and understand how to fight or argue without it resulting in the termination of the marriage.

All of the individuals in this study had an example or a way in which they did not always agree with their spouse. Not every individual used the word fight or conflict. Some used a word or description that was similar like disagreement, argument, or heated debate. The analysis of this particular task led to the development of three main themes. The first theme acknowledges that disagreements are needed and productive in the marriage. Disagreements often lead to understanding the other person's point-of-view, as well as opening the door for a future and more productive discussion. The second theme involves having confidence in being able to disagree with their spouse and express what bothers them. Many times this helped create a sense of trust and fair play and also allowed many individuals to vent and prevented problems from festering. The third theme deals with developing the ability to pick and choose one's battles. Time, patience, and an understanding that not everything is worth fighting about helped many individuals learn when and how to argue with their spouse.

Theme 1 — Disagreements are Needed and Productive

The first theme focuses on disagreements often being needed and productive. There were two main components of this theme: (1) the idea of understanding the other person's viewpoint in the disagreement, and (2) the fact that disagreements can result in a productive discussion.

Understanding the Other Person's Point-of-View

A pattern was evident in the data collected where an individual would disagree with their spouse on a topic and a fight or argument would ensue. After this, the next step involved both individuals listening to the other side of the argument and coming to

some sort of agreement. The result of this was typically a productive conversation. 5-H gives a good example:

> A lot of conflict used to develop over finances. When we were first married, nobody when they're first married has a lot of money, and so she'd want to buy things to make the house look nice, and I'd say, we don't have the money, and then we'd have an argument, back and forth, back and forth. Then finally, it was like, we can pay for that over a period of time. So we were able to talk it out. There may have been some heated discussion at one time during this talking about it, but for the most part we were always able to work out an agreement.

Many individuals (9 of 12) provided specific examples, but many of the comments were about how a disagreement took place and was then resolved. 4-H said:

> You know the other person may not support you in the ways that you would initially like to be supported, but sometimes that's not the best thing either. You have to turn your head around and see your problem from a different perspective.

My observations of couple 4 revealed that they were not the yelling kind of couple, but much more rational and logical. Their description of a disagreement was almost like an intellectual debate where both sides presented their case.

Disagreements Leading to a Productive Discussion

Not only does conflict help bring about a different perspective, but it also keeps you in touch with your spouse's needs and thoughts. 3-H had this to say:

> Conflict is good. In some cases it brings out a different set of opinions, different options than what you are thinking. You may agree with it eventually. It's through conflict and discussion that you learn to hear the other side of the argument.

Couple 3 as a whole seemed to relish their arguments. They were loud and often argued about simple things like dinner. Soon, it became apparent that this was also a form of communication and checking in, more than an actual disagreement. Although not every

couple argues in the same way, they all mentioned how an argument was good because it helped them re-establish communication with their spouse in a more effective manner.

Theme 2 — Confidence Disagreeing with the Spouse

The second theme for task V was having confidence in being able to disagree with a spouse and expressing what was bothering the person. This confidence resulted in two main ways: (1) it allowed the individual to trust in the relationship and build a sense of fair play, and (2) it allowed the individual to vent rather than allowing a problem to fester or grow over time.

Creating Trust

Having trust in the relationship was key to being able to say what was bothersome in the relationship. There are a few forms trust can take in a disagreement. 6-H noted:

> And so having a safe haven is having the trust that she won't say the ultimate and I won't say the ultimate. We may screw all around it. We may be really irritated, upset, mad, all those things, but there is just that area where you just don't go.

This was an example of trusting the other person to know the boundaries of what was appropriate or not appropriate to bring up during an argument. For 4-W trust was feeling that disagreeing or saying what she thought was acceptable and even needed in the relationship. She said:

> I've never had that fear saying what I think. He knew when he married me that I was going to say what I think. I think through his relationships, he grew to want someone that was going to say what they thought.

This trust allowed for a sense of fair play or faith that the other person was not going to hurt them during an argument while allowing them to be free to express themselves. 2-W felt that she and her husband came to a point where it was understood they both were free to say what they wanted:

> But then on the other hand, I don't feel like I have to curb my tongue and not think certain things because it's going to upset him. Because I have a right to feel however I want to feel. He understands that and I understand that about him. We don't agree on everything.

Being Allowed to Vent

Another advantage to having the confidence to say what was bothering them was that it allowed for the individual to vent and not let the problem fester. Some individuals (5 of 12) learned when their spouse was just venting and not actually arguing or fighting with them. Venting became a way of letting off steam to prevent a fight down the road, or even as a way to allow for a more productive conversation later on. 3-W often used this method:

> I have to vent, get it out of my system by screaming and yelling. If we do have a disagreement, which yes we do, he just sits there. He is a calming person. I am a yelling person. Then it's done. He says, okay, fine. Now what? Let's discuss it.

Venting for 5-H allowed for the problem to not grow:

> Well, you could just call it a bitch session if you want. You could sit down and say, okay, what are you pissed off about or what am I pissed off about and let's get it off our chests. It's something that if you don't confront them and you don't talk about them, they tend to fester inside you.

The word 'fester' was one that was used by enough individuals (4 of 12) that it deserved to be tied into how being able to openly discuss one's differences was important in this task. The final point about having confidence and festering is that it also made the individual focus on the problem at hand and helped keep anger out of the equation. 4-H explained it with this comment:

> And knowing how difficult it is to continue feeling good about each other if you leave in an angered state where there is no common ground achieved. You fester. It's better to stay with it and talk about it and get it out. And keep talking until there is some common ground.

Theme 3 — Picking and Choosing a Battle

The final theme for task five was picking and choosing one's battles. This usually developed over time and involved an individual understanding that not everything has to be a battle or is even worth fighting about. This theme stood out where every individual over time now feels like they are able to let a lot more things go, or slide, than when they were first married. 1-W said:

> I think that in our older age, with the realization that everything is not as important as we think it is. With the realization that we are both really good at arguing until we change the perspective of the argument until we are not even arguing about the same thing anymore. That's where I have grown. I am able to walk away; let it go for 24 hours and then figure out exactly what it is I want. What resolution I want to the problem and state that.

Part of being able to pick and choose one's battles was being able to think about the importance of what might be fought about. Many individuals (8 of 12) learned to avoid areas where the couple were just not going to agree. This could be insisting your spouse share your same view on politics or religion. Sometimes a couple would not agree on something and found a way to avoid or compromise on the subject. 6-W had this to say:

> And the other is avoiding issues that, you know, don't deliberately bring up an issue that's a problem. You know, what's the point of bring it up again? He's not going to change his mind on such and such a thing. Accept that and then move on. So, I think you develop a sense of what's critical that needs to be brought up and what's not. You pick your battles. You pick your battles very carefully.

One advantage for each of these individuals was being married for over 25 years. They knew what topics would set off their spouse, and they also learned over the years how to approach certain topics in a more productive way. 3-H stated:

> I think it is understanding how severe the problem is and analyzing whether or not it's worth reacting to at any particular point. As a youngster, I would have reacted a lot faster. As I got older, I eventually accepted it.

They all thought of, and talked about, disagreements or arguments they still have, but the primary difference is now they are much better at arguing and can get to the underlying problem faster than when they were younger.

Conclusion for Task 5

The task of creating a safe haven to allow for conflict focused on three main themes. Disagreements are often good and necessary in a marriage. They allow for each individual to understand their spouse's perspective even if they do not agree with them. This task also showed how individuals of a couple have to feel confident in being able to disagree or state their feelings on a problem. This confidence is built on trust in the relationship and also allows the individual to vent in order to not let a problem grow or fester. Finally, each individual and couple learned that they have to pick and choose their battles; not everything is worth fighting about.

Task VI — Establish and Maintain a Worthwhile Sexual Relationship

According to Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) this task involves couples maintaining intimacy and sexual activity throughout their marriage. This task is not focused just on the issue of sex, but also deals with closeness and intimacy, as defined by the couple.

This was the most private task of the nine. While many individuals (7 of 12) were open and forthcoming during the interview, others (5 of 12) obviously were more reserved and private. Most of the discussion focused on the theme of how sex and intimacy are a consistent form of comfort and closeness that has been there throughout the marriage. There were two main components of this theme: (1) sex versus intimacy, and(2) how this has changed over the course of the marriage.

Theme 1 — Sex Versus Intimacy

All of the individuals made sure they explained there was a difference between the physical act of sex, or love, versus intimacy. For many (6 of 12), it was a way to develop as a couple and be close to their spouse. For some individuals (3 of 12), sex was a way to show and share emotions. 6-H described like this:

> …early on where it's just passion, and sex, and hormones, which is nice, you know- it's almost being symbiotic where you're really close together.

For others (3 of 12), sex was nice, but intimacy was much more important. 1-W explained:

> I think intimacy is a lot more than sex. I don't think our sex-drives have always been in sync or ever will be. Intimacy is important to both of us. Finding what we were both comfortable with.

Sex can be viewed as an immediate form of intimacy but it was not the center point or even the most crucial point of intimacy according to the couples interview for this study. 4-W had this to say about sex:

> There are times when it is very important. There are times when you need that closeness. There are times when what you really need is eight hours of sleep.

Sex for all of these couples was never the end all or be all of the relationship.

Theme 2 — How Intimacy and Sex Change Over Time

This brings us to the second component, how intimacy and sex change over time. For many individuals (6 of 12), the sex drive itself waned over time. Hormone levels drop, there was less time with children around, and different forms of intimacy started to take the place of sex. 5-H had this to say:

> When you're younger I guess the hormones are jumping around too much, maybe not too much, but enough. Then you have kids and it is really hard to find time.

> The relationship isn't always about sex; it's about other things in addition to that, and maybe it's just sitting down reading a book at the same time.

There were quite a few mentions of hormones and how age plays a factor. What many individuals described was learning or discovering a new sense of intimacy and closeness other than sex. 1-H described it this way:

> But as you get older, you realize, obviously, that there are a lot of physical changes in you that make that less of an issue. Hormone levels drop. You don't have all those urges that you used to have. I think, by the same token, it becomes a less important thing. There are other orgasmic things.

What was interesting to note was it was not only men but also women who noticed a change in sex drives and desires as well. It appears that age certainly plays a role, as well as health, in how a couple grows and discovers new ways of being intimate other than sex. 2-W explained:

> Well, I'll tell you. Sex is for the young. But it's okay. But then when the health starts to go, so does the sex drive and the ability. So you have to work on other ways of being intimate other than sex. You touch and that sort of thing.

The importance of sex was also discussed. This task was said to be important by all the individuals, but it was not that important. Being close and intimate was often nice and needed, but it never was said to be crucial or critical. Often sex was second to being close or intimate. On this issue 5-W commented:

> As far as the sexual aspect, I mean, I think it's important. I don't think it's that important… To me it's intimacy and being able just to go out to dinner or something like that and just being able to share feelings or thoughts, and things like that, and concerns. To me that's more important.

3-W was very upfront about the importance of sex when she said:

> Sex? I think getting along with your mate is more important than whether you have sex, or agree on sex.

The act itself was often viewed as a nice aspect of the marriage but never something that had to be there everyday or needed to happen all the time. They were all able to find a new, better, or different way to be close to their spouse. 2-H had this to say about sex and intimacy:

> For me, it's never been number one. It's there and it's something, but it's not number one. I put it way down the list. Getting along is number one as far as I'm concerned.

Conclusion for Task 6

The task of establishing and maintaining a worthwhile sexual relationship served the purpose of creating closeness and intimacy for each individual. Having that comfort and closeness of their spouse was very beneficial and helpful in their marriage. Each individual was able to identify how sex was different from intimacy and often intimacy replaced sex as they got older or in worse health. Sex was also seen as important but not the most important aspect in the relationship. Every individual was able to find a way to be close or intimate with their spouse in ways other than just sex.

Task VII — Keep a Sense of Humor and Shared Interests

According to Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995), this task focuses on everyday life, communication, and contact. In this task the couple keeps a connection in their everyday life through humor and jokes. It also includes hobbies, interests, and pastimes the couple enjoy together.

There was a difference between shared interests and a sense of humor. In order to discuss how each individual approached this task, I will focus on what individuals had to say about a sense of humor and then on shared interests.

Sense of Humor

According to the participants in this study, a sense of humor brings joy or happiness to a marriage. It helps an individual see the lighter side of life and it sometimes acted as a way of relieving stress, or just a way to communicate.

A lot of joy can come from looking at the positive side or lighter side of life. Many individuals (5 of 12) viewed their role or their spouse's role as the optimist or person that cheered them up. Looking at the lighter side of an issue helped many individuals from getting too serious. 6-H saw his sense of humor as being a balance to being too serious:

> And one of the things is that where I think our relationship has really been positive, is she has a tendency to take life too seriously. And, like it or not, I think I've been good in that regard of getting her to kind of ease up a little bit; get a little more laughter in there.

Using humor to change one's perspective was also used. 2-W stated:

> I just do something silly to make him get his mind off of his problems. He does the same to me. So I think things like that are important to see the lighter side of whatever is going on at the time.

Life is too short to be serious all of the time. A sense of humor in a marriage can help make it grow, but also help it from becoming mundane or boring. For some individuals, they would rather be up beat and look for the humor in things than be down all of the time. 1-H did a great job of describing what a sense of humor does for him:

> I tend to try to try to look on the light side of life. I think I always have. Life's too short to get tied up with getting way too serious with it. I think I've always had a tendency to try and look at the brighter side. As to how important it is, to me humor and trying to be optimistic are just important parts of life.

Humor can help with one's outlook on life, it can also play a role in relieving stress or worries. Many individuals used humor as a way to cope or deal with the

everyday or sometimes crisis situations in their lives. A few examples help to illustrate this point. 4-H felt that a sense of humor helps keep life fresh, but also keep life from becoming overwhelming or boring:

> Humor is one of the greatest ways to release stress. I like to be poked fun at, as well as poking fun, even spooking and goosing, and those sorts of little things that kind of get you going. There has always been a lot of laughter in our home. Life without humor is dull.

The humor aspect was what helps defuse potential fights or stressful situations. Many individuals would use humor to defuse a potential fight or someone would make a joke and then they would forget what was so important. 5-H had an example of this:

> My wife had just gotten her bike and wasn't paying attention, she rides right out in front of a car, and I just about had a heart attack when I saw that. The car stopped fortunately before it hit her. So we sat there and I said, 'well, I just almost had a heart attack.' And so we just sat there and laughed about it for a while and she said, 'hey, I better watch where I'm going or I'm going to get hurt.'

When 5-H was younger he said they would have yelled and screamed at each other, but now they could just laugh about a close call and relax, then go on and enjoy the day. For 3-W humor was a way of talking and feeling close:

> It's as important as communication. You want to be able to talk and laugh about stupid things. He'll come home and tell me something stupid and I'll laugh at it. It's important.

A final example was how humor can also make an individual feel closer to his or her spouse. Knowing someone and trusting them enough to be able to laugh with them and at yourself was a form of joy and being close to one's spouse. 4-H had this to say:

> Again, the humor really helps. It is a part of intimacy. Sharing jokes and jousting with each other in a humorous way, is another way of getting close. It's almost like love-making. You are very close to the person.

Shared Interests

Shared interests was the second aspect of this task. Once again, sharing common interests was a way to bring joy and happiness into the marriage. This was done because in many ways it was the basis for the relationship. It was also a way the couple felt and continued to feel attracted and interested in each other.

Having shared interests for many of the individuals (7 of 12) was the basis for the relationship. When you do something with your spouse that you both enjoy you often grow closer and remember what you like about that person. 2-H described it like this:

> But it's also important to share some interests. If you don't, then I would think you would grow further apart. You would be more of a lone ranger than a partner. I think that's one reason why we haven't drifted apart. I know some older people who are in two different worlds. I think that's probably what happened. They just gradually stopped sharing any interests.

For many individuals it was the shared interests and common ground that initially attracted them to their spouse. Sometimes the interests might have changed or shifted, but many times that original interest remained. 4-W discussed that aspect of her relationship:

> Again, the initial relationship was based on that. There were a lot of shared interests. Values were important. I think we talked about a lot of things other couples don't think to talk about because we were older. I was a backpacker before we met. I think that that was a huge common bond initially. It gave us a wonderful thing to do together. And we still do.

A final example of this initial common bond was described by 6-W as a lasting interest in their spouse:

> What do you have in common? Why did you marry the person? It was interesting in that we never have a lack of something to discuss — absolutely never. There is so much we have in common to talk about or find out about, or learn new things about.

The initial attraction and shared interests help keep the marriage alive and the individuals interested in each other. For some individuals (3 of 12) the initial interests might not be an option now, but new interests or activities have taken their place. For example, 5-W discussed a new interest she and her husband have found:

> I used to go on a lot of trips by myself and now he wants to come along with me, which it is great. You know, at first it kind of cramped my style, but it's great. You know, I really enjoy having him come with me.

Learning to adapt and change and try new interests together was also said to be directly related to why a marriage works. Keeping that interest in your spouse was very strongly associated with keeping the marriage alive and lasting. 3-H, who was often very blunt during the interview, broke it down in this simple passage:

> If you don't have shared interests, then why come home? If you don't have a reason to come home and you don't share interests, you go out to bars all the time. Or you just find reasons not to come home. For my wife and me, we have always found shared interests where we said 'Okay. Let's keep coming home.'

Conclusion for Task 7

The task of keeping a sense of humor and shared interest was probably one of the most intersting tasks of the nine. This task brings joy and happiness into the relationship. A good sense of humor can keep an individual looking at the lighter, less serious side of life. It also allows for needed stress relief, serves as a form of communication, and helps resolve or prevent fights or arguments. Sharing common interests reminds each individual why they got married, and also what they enjoy about their spouse. Common interests or common ground also help the individual remember why they come home and what kind of joy or satisfaction they get out of the marriage. Without addressing this task, many couples would have nothing to do, nothing to say to each other, and have no

reason to come home.

Task VIII — Provide Comfort and Support to Each Other

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) noted that this task involves providing emotional support and comfort. This occurs when each member of the marriage nurtures the marriage as well as his/her spouse providing relief, sympathy, encouragement, or support depending on the situation.

There are two themes for how individuals approached implementing this task. The first theme involves the type of support an individual gives and/or receives from his/her spouse. This support comes in three main forms: (a) listening, (b) emotional support, and (c) acts of service or doing something to help. The second theme deals with the support that leads to togetherness for the couple. There were three components of this theme as well: (a) being on the same side or team, (b) unconditional love, and (c) having a sense of security and being able to depend upon the spouse.

Theme 1 — Types of Support

The first theme focuses on the types of support an individual gives to or receives from his/her spouse. This first aspect of this was the importance of listening.

Listening Support

Seven of the 12 individuals mentioned listening as crucial to how they received or provided support. In these cases it was not that the person wanted or needed someone to solve the problem, but the person wanted to have a chance to express worry, fear, or even vent about the situation. 1-W explained:

> My husband and I both have a tendency to want to solve the other one's problems. A lot of time that's not what you need. You just need someone to listen to what

> the problem is. There are some times where I just want him to listen and to know that he is there for me.

5-H commented:

> You have to be there to listen, is the biggest thing. If your spouse wants to speak to you or talk about the day, talk about the problems, they just need someone to listen to, they need a sounding board in many cases, and that's probably the most important thing, in providing that support.

Listening allows individuals to get whatever was on their mind off, and then move on. Sometimes this resulted in problem solving or working on it together; other times all that was needed was just a listening ear. Another advantage of listening, according to some of the participants in this study (5 of 12), involved having someone listen first and immediately try to solve the problem for them. 4-W explained:

> Listen and not tell me what to do. A lot of people, their version of comforting is to listen to the problem and then immediately give you advice. I don't respond that way. If people do that, then I close up. I will not continue to share. He is really good about that, always willing to provide relief by listening.

Emotional Support

The second component of the kind of support one can receive was emotional support. This was described by some individuals (6 of 12) as a way they could re-charge or feel validated by their spouse. For 4-H, the support was needed for stress experienced at work:

> Probably in having her as a place I can go to for emotional support. In particular with respect to my job and career over the years, there have been some tough times. Having her there to support and help me get through some of those tougher times.

Another example of giving emotional support involved not even using words. 2-H described this:

> Like when you go to bed at night, just before you go to sleep, you reach over and pat your wife… Just to let her know that you're there and that everything is okay and it will be okay tomorrow.

A final example of emotional support was just offering an understanding and being available for the other person if needed. 3-H described it by saying:

> But I think to some extent we have an understanding as to what the other one is going through. And you try to offer compassion if it needs to be done.

Active Support

The final way of giving support was through acts of service. This usually was when the individual or spouse took action or did something tangible. It could be something very simple like making dinner or watching the kids, to something more difficult like making funeral arrangements. Seven of the 12 participants in the study mentioned some way in which they or their spouse did something to help show their support. 2-W had this example:

> Last February, when I had that gallbladder attack in Florida on our trip, he really came through like a champ. I was surprised. I couldn't take care of the dog. So he pretty much stepped up and did what he was supposed to do, or what needed to be done. I call it 'toting and fetching.' Sometimes I needed to tell him what needed to be done and he did it.

For 6-W her way of doing something was taking over when her spouse was not able to:

> A lot of times he'll want me to take charge, like, when his mother died and stuff, it was making the arrangements to get him to the funeral and whatnot. Helping him think when he was stressed. You just sort of step up to the plate and instinctively know what to do to help out.

Acts of service and doing something were often said to be easy, but not always what was best. A combination of all three was usually used and most of the time it depended upon the situation at hand.

Theme 2 — Support Leads to Togetherness

The second theme deals with support that leads to togetherness. There were three components of this theme: (1) a feeling of being on the same side or team, (2) a feeling of unconditional love, and (3) a sense of security and knowledge that your spouse will be there for you.

Marriage is a Team Effort

Many individuals (6 of 12) felt that marriage was like being on a team. A great way to feel together is to be part of a team. Even if an individual would prefer to handle something on his/her own, there are times when having someone on your side is very helpful. 1-H explained:

> I tend to be self-reliant. But there are times when you really need to have somebody to be on your side and I think 1-W does that. I can depend upon 1-W to be supportive of me and listen to me when I had problems.

His wife also agreed about being on the same team. 1-W said:

> Well, I think it's like I said before, knowing that there is somebody there that is going to back you up no matter what.

Knowing that they did not have to face a problem or situation alone often provided a lot of comfort and support before anything even had to be said.

Unconditional Love

In addition to being on the same team, there was also an idea of having unconditional love from one's spouse. Not only will the person be on your team but they will also love you no matter what the situation. There was a lot of comfort once again in knowing that a person was there and willing to help and support you however you needed it. 6-H described it this way:

> And I guess what's important is offering to do something, and if it's rejected, it's not a rejection of me. It's just that, no, that's not what I need right now. So, it comes into that zone of understanding where it's, I guess, I hate to say, but unconditional love, where you know, it's unconditional acceptance and whatever.

4-H had this to say about unconditional love:

> You think about people falling hopelessly in love. For us it was a real mature feeling. I'm not sure how to define that. I guess I could define that as meaning it was as much intellectual as it was physical. It was all these things together. That has maintained itself throughout the entire relationship. That love is always there, and will always support me and her, and that is a great comfort.

Security in Being Supported

The final aspect of building togetherness from support was the sense of security in knowing that the individual was going to be supported by his/her spouse. This sense of security led to a reassurance and confidence in their spouse and also in their ability to handle tough situations. 3-W noted:

> I tried to be supportive when his father died. It was nice to know he could count on me and I could count on him being there for each other.

4-W had the same experience:

> Again, there has never been a doubt that it wouldn't be there, from my perspective. I think that is really key. I think that is part of intimacy, having the knowledge that my spouse will be there at all times for me.

Conclusion for Task 8

The task of providing comfort and support to each other played a crucial role for each individual in this study. Two main themes were developed for how individuals approached this task. First, the kind of support that an individual provided or needed from his/her spouse was one of three different types. Listening, having emotional support, and acts of service were the main components that supported this theme. The second theme was how support leads to togetherness. For this theme, knowing that the

individual was a part of a team, had the unconditional love of the spouse, and the security of knowing the spouse was there for them supported this theme.

Task IX — Keep in Mind Why and How You Originally Fell in Love

This task was described by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) as having a "double vision" of the marriage. The couple keeps in mind why and how they fell in love and use this in the present to support and carry on in their marriage. The couple is able to remember past times and use that knowledge and experience with their present situation.

Every individual had a different approach to discussing how they approached this task. Keeping in mind why and how the individual fell in love resulted in creating a foundation for the relationship. Two main themes were developed the first involves how a person's initial attraction to his/her spouse played a role in life today, supported by (a) by having shared interests, and (b) fulfilling a missing piece in his/her life. The second theme dealt with what was important to remember from the past without dwelling on the past, supported by: (a) an individual remembering his/her first date, (b) understanding one can not go back to the past, and (c) creating new memories.

Theme 1 — How Initial Attraction Plays a Role in Marriage

The first theme involves how the initial attraction still plays a role in each individual's life. This involves how the couple keeps interest in each other throughout their marriage, and also how an individuals spouse fulfills a missing piece in his/her life.

Shared Interests

For four of the 12 participants in the study the interests they had when they were first married were still true at the time of the interview. 5-W shared this:

> We're both still real active, we both like to do things, we don't like to sit on our butts. And so, I think that really helped as well in our marriage.

For 3-W it was "we just realized we did a lot of things together and still do." A final example was offered by 4-W:

> I think whenever we feel like we get too busy, we go back to what we so enjoyed about each other. That was the time that we spend getting away and being out in nature. We are always happiest if, at least once a month, we have some kind of weekend like that or at least a full day. That always grounds us. We tend to then get all things back that were important early on and keep those as important for today.

Missing Piece

Initial attraction also came in the form of the other person fulfilling a particular role or creating a certain place in the other individual's life. For some individuals (4 of 12) this was when their spouse acted like a missing piece, or gave them an outlook or perspective they enjoyed and wanted to always have around. 6-H does an excellent job of providing an example of this:

> So it was just bringing a whole new perspective, and I guess it filled a void in me, where I never really looked at- I never looked at life that way before. And so it was a really- gee that sounds fun. Let's keep doing that; I enjoy that. It's still there. It's just an aspect of 6-W's personality that is missing in mine, and makes me want to do things. Otherwise, I could just sit there and never leave my own little world and miss out on an entirely different perspective in life.

For 4-H the missing piece was the stability and foundation his spouse provided him. In his case the basis for the relationship had to be found in order for everything to work out, and to keep working out. He explained:

> It turns out for me it was critical. It was very important. Because all of the other basis for relationships over time has crumbled. They were all up here in this passion. My relationship with my wife was solid. It was, I'm really interested in what you have to say. It was like looking inside of each other's soul… That has maintained itself throughout the entire relationship. That basis of what we both bring to the relationship is still the basis of why we are still in love.

Theme 2 — Remembering the Past but Not Dwelling on It

The second theme focused on remembering the past, but not dwelling on it. This involved an individual remembering his/her first date, understanding one can not go back to the past, and creating new memories.

Remembering the First Date

Almost all of the individuals (9 of 12) remembered and described what their first date was like. For 2-W the memory of her first date with her spouse makes her smile and remember times long ago. This memory "is nice" but does not serve much of a purpose other than that. She said:

> We were young and dumb. In a way, it was so much fun. I went to the show with 2-H instead of the ball game with the guy who was supposed to take me.

For 3-W the first date was a time to laugh and remember, but once again it played no other purpose. She commented:

> I remember the first time we met, at his school of all places. I said "He's cute. Why don't I get him to dance?" Of course, next to the last song he came over and finally asked me to dance. After that we went to a basketball game. I guess we just kind of realized we did a lot of things together, it was fun, but it's not the same now.

Cannot Go Back to the Past

Most of the dates have little in common, but there was a sense of enjoying what they had. Nobody, though, wanted to go back to those times. For 1-W the experience from her marriage would help in the past but it was not something she dwells on trying to live over. She explained:

> If I could go back and be a young person with the knowledge and the experience that I have now, I would do things entirely differently than I did in my early life. I wouldn't give up the growth that I have obtained for youth for any reason. I am

> more comfortable now than then. It's good to remember, but I sure wouldn't want to go back and relive it again.

This sense of not going back was also apparent for others as well (5 of 12). Those that mention the fact that you can not go back have moved on, or realize that the past is the past and you cannot change it. 3-H explained it like this:

> So no, there was no reason to go back. I know exactly where we met, when we met. What we did. I can tell you the first movie that we went to. I can tell you what I wore the first time I knocked on her door. I was wearing my school scarf. We met at a dance and she thought I was somebody else. So yeah, I can remember back all that far. But I don't dwell on it.

Not dwelling on the past allows for the creation of new memories. Some of the individuals (4 of 12) remembered the past, but so much time and change has occurred since then they have newer memories and build on the original ones. In some cases the memory of that foundation or starting point helps affirm the individual's choice in a spouse. For example, 6-W uses new memories to compare against what she originally thought and felt. She explained:

> Well, I look at him now and I see an awesome man, and my instincts were right. I haven't met anyone I would have liked to have spent my life with other than him. You have to remind yourself of that when you say fall out of or get down, you have to look at why did you marry the person to begin with, and who are you in love with today?

Creating New Memories

An example of creating new memories was 1-H who felt that memories build on that initial one and keep growing with the marriage. When asked about what purpose those initial memories serve his reply was:

> I guess they do to some extent, but you tend to replace those with more recent ones. Everyday you make decisions to love this person and everyday you have these experiences with them that kind of just build. You get very comfortable

> with them. It's kind of just a gradual build. It gets to the point where they are so much of an intertwined part of your life that you can't see life without that.

For 2-W it was nice to make a new memories but still remember the old ones. She explained:

> It's just kind of a pleasant memory. We were really young and dumb and excited about everything, and complaining about work. It was fun. Now, we have new stuff to think about and laugh about. We aren't as young, and I'd like to think we aren't as dumb, and we have new memories that we talk about not just those original ones. We also talk about what is to come, and enjoying the moments we still have as well.

Conclusion for Task 9

The task of remembering how and why one fell in love created a sense of foundation for the individuals in this study. The foundation was formed by remembering their initial attraction to their mate, from shared interests, filling in a missing piece in their life, and having common ground to build on. The foundation was also formed by the importance of remembering the past but not dwelling on it. This occurred with the individuals remembering their first dates and relishing in those happy memories, but not dwelling on them or attempting to relive the past. Also, new memories were formed based on those first dates and early memories that create a strong foundation for the marriage.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter answers the first research question: How does each individual of the couple demonstrate approaching the nine tasks that contribute to long-term marriage? The chapter started with the six couples being introduced and described as a couple and as individuals. Each of the nine tasks developed by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) were then described and broken down individually. The major themes that were

developed were presented and described.

The first task, separating from the family of origin had two main themes: (1) the degree of difficulty in separating from the family, and (2) the development of a new family identity. The second task, building togetherness, intimacy, and autonomy focused on four main themes: (1) having common interests, (2) balancing the "I" and "we" aspects of each individuals life, (3) supporting their spouses "I" needs and wants, and (4) focusing on how this task occurs or is achieved in a marriage. The third task, maintaining privacy while becoming a parent focused on two themes: (1) dealing with how issues of privacy changed, and (2) finding new ways to maintain privacy. Task four, confront and master crises of life, explored two themes: (1) the most common type of crises were health issues, and (2) how each individual deals with a crisis as a team or unit. Task five, create a safe haven to allow for conflict, covered three main themes: (1) disagreements are needed and productive, (2) each individual had confidence in being able to disagree with their spouse, and (3) how the individual developed the ability to pick and choose one's battles in a disagreement. Task six, establish and maintain a worthwhile sexual relationship, discussed the two themes of (1) sex versus intimacy, and (2) how sex and intimacy change over the course of the marriage. Task seven, a sense of humor and shared interests, covered the importance of how a sense of humor makes a marriage fun, and how shared interests help keep the couple interested in each other. Task eight, provide comfort and support to each other, focused on two themes: (1) the type of support given and received in a marriage, and (2) how support leads to togetherness for a couple. Finally, task nine, keep in mind why and how you originally fell in love, examined two

themes: (1) how initial attraction to one's spouse plays a role in their marriage today, and (2) how it is important to remember but not dwell on past events.

Chapter 5

Analysis of Additional Tasks, Hierarchy, and Change in Definitions to Wallerstein and Blakeslee's (1995) Nine Developmental Tasks of a Marriage

Chapter Introduction

This chapter is organized to answer the second research question: In regards to the theoretical framework utilized in this study (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995), (a) What additional tasks are identified that extend the set of developmental tasks?, (b) Is there some hierarchy that becomes evident from the data collected in this study to demonstrate that the tasks can be arranged from most important to least important?, and (c) Do the definitions of each task remain the same or have they changed since 1995? Each sub-question is answered individually, the member check is presented, and a conclusion wraps up the entire research question at the end of the chapter.

Sub-Question (A): What Additional Tasks are Identified That Extend the Set of Developmental Tasks?

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) identified nine developmental tasks related to successful marriage. I was curious as to what additional tasks my participants might add to the list. I have grouped similar tasks the participants discussed together and created four new tasks. The four new tasks, as evidenced by data collected in this study, are: (1) the ability to compromise, (2) having outside support, (3) planning for the future, and (4) having similar backgrounds.

First New Task — Compromise

The first new task is the ability to compromise. The two main components of this task, as supported by (10 of 12) participants, include: (1) having a give and take attitude, and (2) understanding how to compromise in a marriage. Being able to compromise is

having an understanding that one individual cannot have everything his/her way, or do what he/she want all of the time. It is similar to building togetherness (task 2), but more along the lines of being self-sacrificing and knowing you are in the marriage with someone else, not just yourself.

Give and Take

Being able to give and take in a marriage was something commented on by seven out of the 12 individuals in this study. Being able to give and take comes in a few different forms. It could be in the form of support, as 1-H indicated:

> I think that's a part of why a lot of marriages don't last, is because people can't do that. Our society as a whole is a "me" society, and people are too worried about themselves and don't have that ability to do that compromising. They don't put somebody else's needs above their own. I feel like I have done that in my marriage. I think 1-W has done the same for me. It's kind of a give and take and knowing when to support and when to give.

Another example of give and take was having an understanding of topics like children and deciding who is in charge of the finances. For 3-W, this was something she and her husband agreed upon early in the marriage:

> We had an agreement when we first had the kids. I didn't work. I worked before I had kids. When I got pregnant, I stopped working. It was understood that I didn't have to go back to work because I was going to be at home with the kids. Yet, he still went to work. Same thing goes for finances. He makes the money and I spend it.

A final example was being able to understand when your spouse did something for you and when you needed to do something for your spouse. Sometimes the couple might alternate who gets to pick the movie to watch or what restaurant to eat at that week. 2-H described it like this:

> If I were to go out and drink with the boys, that was okay. But she would say, "Okay, you did that, go with me shopping on Saturday." So I would go shopping.

> We would substitute one thing with the other. If I went to a bowling league, or a committee meeting, she wouldn't always have to have something for her to do. But then a couple weeks, or a month later, she would say, "Why don't you go down and see my sister with me?" We substitute sometimes.

Each example shows how the individual in the couple understood the need to give and take in order to reach a compromise. Doing one thing they wanted, but giving up another played a large role in allowing the couples to be able to compromise in their marriage.

Understanding How to Compromise

The other component to compromise was understanding how to compromise in a marriage. Some individuals (5 of 12) gave examples of how they went about learning to compromise in their marriage. Often this knowledge was not innate or known before the marriage, but came about through a period of trial and error. As time progressed in the marriage, each individual was better able to understand their spouse's point of view and also learned how to compromise. According to 6-W:

> Whenever you've got two people living together, they're very different, and there are some things you're gonna have to ignore, and there's some things you're gonna have to deal with, and you have to pick and choose which ones are which. Part of it's just thinking about it. Is that a real important issue? What can you absolutely not put up with? You have to learn not everything is worth fighting about.

In addition to picking and choosing your battles, some individuals had very specific ways they learned to compromise. For some (4 of 12), it came in the form of outside help. Two couples commented that they went to marriage counseling in order to learn how to compromise in their marriage. Related to this 5-W said:

> I guess the most important thing for me is compromise and that was probably one of the most difficult things for 5-H to do was to compromise. I also think that's one of the things that we learned to do together. Compromise and work through things, I think too many people are so willing to just say, "okay, screw it, I'm going to get a divorce," and not do the hard work that entails to keep a marriage

> together. I'm a firm believer in marital counseling with a good counselor, and doing the work that is involved, and not being afraid to confide in your spouse.

Being able to compromise was a crucial task that was not included in Wallerstein and Blakeslee's original set of nine tasks; however, compromise is an important finding in other long-term marriage studies (Alford-Cooper, 1998; Weishaus & Field, 1988). Couples that were able to give and take and learn how to compromise were the two main components to this new task. The ability to compromise is something that a married couple can always work on and improve upon.

Second New Task — Having Outside Support

The second new task involves having outside support. This task is confronted when the married couple needs support from people outside the husband-wife relationship. Outside people usually included extended family, friends, or even co-workers. Having a support network of other people helped many married couples manage stress and difficult times in their marriage. Having outside support was beneficial for all individuals, but the degree of benefit certainly varied.

For 4-H the benefit of friends was that different perspective that helped keep the marriage fresh and exciting. An outside viewpoint can go a long way to helping you have new areas of discussion with your spouse. 4-H explained:

> I think having good friendships and getting together with friends, that's been really important to us. Again, that kind of falls into the fun category. But it also allows us to talk to other people instead of just each other about things that are important to us, or are bothering us. You have to have relationships out there too. You learn from other people and you can bring that back into the relationship for discussion.

Having a support network also helped those couples with children. Knowing they could drop the children at a grandparent's house or friend's house also was helpful early on in

the childhood years. More than this though, the support network also serves as an outlet and a way to keep a different perspective on your marriage. For 5-H having his in-laws be supportive made it easier for him to feel accepted and a part of the family. This acceptance also brought him closer to his wife:

> My in-laws, her parents, were very, very accepting of me. It just made me feel like I was part of their family from day one in the beginning. And her sister — well, she's got two sisters and two brother-in laws, and they're very nice. We get along very well with her family. I know that being hated by her family and her being hated by my family would have been very difficult for our marriage and not a lot of places to turn.

In addition to having supportive in-laws just having close friends also played an important role. These friends often took pressure off of the marriage and gave the couple a fresh look at themselves. 5-W commented:

> For us it was friends as our support network because my family was so far away and 5-H's family, although they were close physically, we're not emotionally close at all or helpful. I think one of the factors that helped keep us together was friends. We had some good friends that we would do things with, and we'd have fun. We'd have so much fun with them and it's like, well, maybe this isn't so bad. And then I could talk with the friends and it would give me a different perspective on things. So they play a very important role.

Having outside support plays an important role in a long-term marriage. Not every need or want can be met by one's spouse. Sometimes friends, family, and in-laws can offer that different perspective or support that might not always be available from a spouse. This task of outside support is also something that does not go away during a marriage, it might grow or decrease in importance throughout the marriage, but it is something that will always be beneficial during a marriage. Other research has also noted the importance of having some outside support in a marriage (e.g., friends, family, relatives) (Bost, Cox, & Burchinal, 2002; Proulx, Helms, & Payne, 2004).

Third New Task — Planning for the Future

The third new task deals with planning for the future. This task addresses an individual's ability to see the future with their spouse reaction to a variety of subjects like having children, finances, retirement, moving, and dealing with old age. It is having a sense of "this is who we are now" and also "this is where we want to be 5, 10, 15 years from now."

When asked about additional tasks, planning for the future was mentioned by five of the 12 participants in this study. In the case of 1-W, it was a way of making sure the couple does not loose focus when life events change around them. A change of a career path, or having the kids move out of the house, can be upsetting if you do not understand where you and your spouse are going. 1-W explained:

> The ability to see the future together has been important. 1-H is really involved with his work and his interests are quite varied form mine. The type of work that I do is pretty solitary. To find some way that we could create a life that included those diverse interests and the interest that we both have, was real important. When everyone [kids and her kids friends] left for school that completely changed my life. It was a pretty desolate time, not having a vision of where my life was going to go from there. I think, coming up with a common vision for the future was real important and helped keep the marriage grounded.

This task also holds true from a financial standpoint. Having a shared vision of what will happen down the road can help ease potential rough spots or concerns that might happen in the future. According to 4-W:

> One of our tasks I see is how do we set it up where we are cared for, with the hope that my son is going to be very interested in caring for me? I don't think my son would have any idea the intensity of what is needed to care for an elderly parent. How are you going to plan for the future as a couple? Planning in terms of investing and saving and working with financial advisors. Even to the point where my family has longevity. So I have long-term care insurance whereas 4-H decided it wasn't necessary for him. He is certain I am going to live a decade or more longer than he does.

For 2-H finances was the one area he felt benefits a marriage in terms of planning on it for the future:

> The important thing about having money is it gives you freedom. What it does though is it allows you to go where you want and that sort of thing. As long as you don't let it go to your head. It's just that money is important to have when you are old. It just really is. It's easy to talk about. It's easy to plan and figure and all that. As people get older and older, they worry more and more about whether they have enough money. It doesn't matter how much you have as long as you have enough, as long as you don't lord it over anybody.

Having a plan for the future was the third task developed by the individuals in this study. Other researchers (Kaufman & Taniguchi, 2006; Lauer & Lauer, 1986) have also found that planning for the future is an important finding in their studies on long-term marriages. In some cases, planning for the future meant keeping shared interests alive and looking forward to creating new ones. It also meant discussing your financial future with your spouse and realizing that you are not going to live forever. A married couple needs to be aware of their current situation as well as plan for their time together in the upcoming years. This task was very important to the five individuals who discussed it. It helped make and keep them happy because they knew that if the were not around tomorrow their spouse would be taken care of.

Fourth New Task — Having Similar Backgrounds

The final task that was added involves having similar backgrounds. This is not sharing similar interests, but focuses on the time before the couple met and sharing the same direction and background. This was a new kind of task, in that it was not something that continued through the marriage like the other tasks, rather it was an indicator for attraction early on in the marriage. Although this task was not viewed by

the participants in this study as a requirement, and not every couple needed or even had this in order to have a long term marriage, it was very helpful and made the marriage easier for some individuals (6 of 12).

For 6-H, it focused on being of like minds. Having a similar focus and likes before getting married played an important role in his mind:

> I think one of the things that I would put in there is, there has to be a certain maturity. You can't be too different. It's like having very different goals in life or abilities in life. If one spouse is happy with let's say, a high school education, and the other spouse has aspirations for more education. I think that that's a real imbalance. Those two might not last. I think it's a – if you're too different and you don't grow together, then you grow apart. It's that simple.

A similar view was shared by 3-H. He felt that your upbringing and background plays a large part in how you approach a marriage:

> To some extent, for me, I think what matters is upbringing. I don't want to say it's religious at all. I guess it's more of your upbringing. For me, divorce isn't really an option. It's not a question. So I don't think about it. I would say more times than not, what is innate in you is your upbringing. The part that has some general fortitude says, 'that's not what I want to be.' But I think for the most part your upbringing dictates what your outlook on life is. Finding someone with that same view makes it much easier.

A final take on this was voiced by 2-W who felt that it was not only having a similar background, but also really liking your spouse.

> You pretty much have to like each other as well as love each other. I like 2-H. He's a good guy. I like the way he thinks. I don't like everything he does, but I can tell him if I don't like it. We are similar in the way we think and the things we like, we always have been. So many people really fight so much. They fight and make up, fight and make up. I could never understand that. I think it's because they don't like each other very much.

For each of these examples, the individual felt that having a similar background or viewpoint helped to ground the basis for the marriage. This task of having a similar background was also shared as a factor that is very supportive of long-term marriages

(Klagsbrun, 1985; Mackey & O'Brien, 1995). If a person is too different from you it is much more difficult to grow together. If you grew up with some subjects or topics being unquestionable and the other did not, you are going to have a harder time. Finally, if you don't really look at things from the same view point, you probably are not going to like the person you are in love with. Whatever the case, having a similar background helps the marriage from the start.

Concluding Remarks for Sub-Question A

The ability to compromise, having outside support, planning for the future, and having similar backgrounds, were added by the participants in this study to the existing nine tasks developed by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995). Each of the first three tasks is continuous throughout the marriage, just like the original nine. The fourth task is not necessarily continuous, but helps with the initial attraction and foundation for the marriage.

Sub-Question (B): Is There Some Hierarchy That Becomes Evident from the Data Collected in This Study to Demonstrate That the Tasks Can Be Arranged From Most Important to Least Important?

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) identified nine developmental tasks to support good marriage. These tasks did not have a particular rank or order to them in terms of importance in a marriage. Part of this study attempted to explore if a hierarchy existed among these nine tasks and to find out which ones are considered more important than others in a long-term marriage. When the participants were questioned about this, some individuals rank ordered the tasks from least to most important, while others selected the top three and picked what would be at the bottom. The results of this were three tasks stood out as the most important in a long term marriage and two stood out as being of

lesser importance. The three tasks selected as most important were: (1) task eight: providing comfort and support to each other, (2) task seven: keeping a sense of humor and shared interests, and (3) task two: building togetherness, intimacy, and autonomy. The two tasks selected as less important were: (1) task nine: keeping in mind why and how you originally fell in love, and (2) task one: separating from the family of origin.

Most of the discussion about these tasks focused on why some were ranked lower than others. The top tasks were very difficult for the individuals to explain why they were more important other than it being a "feeling" or saying "they just are" more important. The three tasks of lesser importance had more specific reasons and examples from the individuals as to why they were ranked lower.

Top Three Tasks

The top three most important tasks were: providing comfort and support to each other, keeping a sense of humor and shared interests, and building togetherness, intimacy and autonomy. It was apparent that these three top tasks were the fundamental aspects of the individual's relationship with his/her spouse. Many individuals commented that these three were more important because of a feeling or that the three combined provided the majority of what was important in their marriage. Each task is discussed and individual explanations are provided.

First Top Task — Providing Comfort and Support to Each Other

The first important task was task eight, providing comfort and support to each other. For almost all of the individuals (10 of 12), this task ranked in the top three. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) commented that providing comfort and support to each other was one of the main aspects of a marriage. The idea of having someone else to fall

back on and rely on was discussed and often critical for each individual. For 1-W this was ranked in the top because:

> I would say comfort and respect, just companionship. I think that's what we are all looking for, someone that we are comfortable with and can depend on.

Participant 2-W also described the importance of this task as having someone on your side:

> It means that you are pretty much in-tuned emotionally. Whatever the situation is, whether it is school, work, health, family, or whatever, you know whatever you need to do, or whatever you want to do about any situation, your spouse will support you.

For 3-W there was also the importance of having to have that comfort for the marriage to even last:

> I mean if I was in pain and he didn't comfort me, I would hate him. I think he would be hurt too if he was in pain and I didn't comfort him. That would be a deep hurt that you couldn't get over.

Second Top Task —— Keeping a Sense of Humor and Shared Interests

The second top task was number seven, keeping a sense of humor and shared interests. Once again the majority of the individuals (9 of 12) ranked this task in the top three of importance. Of the nine individuals who ranked this task in the top three, only three of the participants offered a detailed explanation of why the task ranked high. The rest struggled with the words and just said they used it more or felt it was more important but did not offer as detailed and explanation. For some this task was the way the individual approached life (i.e., with a sense of humor). Keeping humor in the marriage was of the utmost importance to make sure things never got too serious. 6-H was able to explain how a sense of humor was key in his marriage:

> The most important I would say, from my perspective is keep a sense of humor and shared interests. It's too easy to take life too seriously. And I think if you take life too seriously, then every little piss-ant thing that comes up becomes a big issue. So I think the little day-to day stuff; if you take life too seriously; if you can't laugh, those are things that escalate. And that's what I think humor and openness can do for you. It elevates it above this petty little stuff, and then you look at it and you really see what its worth.

In addition to the sense of humor aspect, keeping shared interests was also of the utmost importance. In the previous chapter, many individuals (7 of 12) cited having shared interests as critical to their marriages. For 3-H, shared interests must be present in order to keep the marriage alive:

> If anything, it's shared interests. I really think that if you don't have shared interest you are not going to stay together. It's the same as friends. I'll look back and I'll regret that I don't keep in touch with a lot of my high school friends, or my college friends, or somebody who was a friend five years ago. But for some reason you know longer share the interests. I think with a marriage the same thing happens. If you don't have shared interests or you no longer have similar interests, you don't talk, you don't communicate. As a result, your marriage dissolves.

Third Top Task – Building Togetherness, Intimacy, and Autonomy

The third top task was number two, building togetherness, intimacy, and autonomy. This task was ranked in the top three by the majority of individuals (9 of 12) once again because it fit the mold or foundation for many marriages. This task was also compared a lot to providing comfort and support and shared interests and sense of humor. Having someone support and comfort you as well as making jokes and sharing interests was cited as ways to build togetherness. The most important part of this task to the individuals in this study was having their marriage, but also maintaining some autonomy as well.

For 4-W, the autonomy piece was crucial to keep the marriage intact:

> If someone had not given me that autonomy I wouldn't still be with him today. That's just how important that is to me.

Participant 1-H described the blending the tasks related to building togetherness, intimacy, and autonomy:

> You have the shared interest and there are things that you interact with. Those interactions keep you together. I think the humor and the shared interest is all a part of building the togetherness. The intimacy of your marriage is you have those things that are common that you both like and that you do together. I think that togetherness is an important thing. You have to have some time away to yourself.

Finally, for 5-H he commented that task two was important in his marriage because it allowed both of them to grow and follow what they loved

> …being together but yet being our own person, being our own professional, creating our own careers and following our own career paths, was very important to both of us.

Conclusions for the Top Three Tasks

There was a high level of consistency on rating which tasks were the top three among all of the individuals. Tasks eight, seven and two were ranked by 10 of 12, 9 of 12, and 9 of 12 of the individuals, as the most important ones in their marriage. Most of the discussion surrounding the reason these tasks ranked so high focused on creating a base or foundation for the rest of the tasks. According to the participants in this study, it was hard to rank a task like number three, (i.e., maintain privacy while becoming a parent) if the individual did not feel comforted, have shared interests, or lacked a feeling of togetherness with their spouse first. I think 4-H described the reason these three tasks rank at the top very well:

> Those three things hit you at the gut level that you need. They provide support for your deepest needs. And the other stuff is important, but these are the top ones.

The Bottom Two Tasks

The two tasks selected as least important were task nine, keeping in mind why and how you originally fell in love, and task one, separating from the family of origin. The majority of individuals ranked these two in the bottom, 9 of 12 for task number nine, and 8 of 12 for task number one. The rest of the tasks varied in ranking with no clear third task that fit into the bottom category.

First Bottom Task – Keeping in Mind How and Why You Originally Fell in Love

The first task that was ranked in the bottom three was task nine, keeping in mind why and how you originally fell in love. Many individuals (9 of 12) said this task was not important or played a very small role in their marriage. In a lot of ways, remembering how and why one fell in love did not mean much after 25 or more years of marriage. The passing of time played a big role because many of the individuals could remember how and why the fell in love, but that memory was not the same as the love they have now. In some cases, it was a matter of fact thing and then the individual moved on to the other tasks, as was the case for 6-H:

> Well, funny, but I think "keep in mind why and how you originally fell in love" isn't that important in the sense that it happened. And it's not something I feel I have to go back to every night or every couple of weeks and say, oh yes, and relive that. We met and it's there. It's not belittling it. If I hadn't found 6-W, who knows? But I did, and here's what we built. So it kind of starts it, but then you don't always follow it.

2-W was much more to the point, "Well, the why part doesn't matter so much, we just did." Her husband 2-H also agreed with this standpoint that it happened a long time ago:

> Keeping in mind why and how I originally fell in love, that's an abstract thing anyway. That's not too important just because that was a long time ago. I mean, really. I remember it, but it doesn't matter that much now. I love 2-W for now, not then.

The idea of the person changing and not being the same when you first fell in love was also a reason this task ranked lower. Participants in this study noted that they still loved their spouse, but in new ways. 5-W explained:

> I think we've changed so much, I mean, I'm not the same person and he's not the same person 32 years ago that we are now. Why and how we fell in love isn't the way we necessarily feel about each other now. I mean, I can honestly say we have a deep love for each other now, but it's not like that romantic type of love. It's better now than it was back then.

Second Bottom Task – Separating from Family of Origin

The other task that was placed at the bottom of importance (ranked by 8 of 12) was task one, separating from family of origin. This is not surprising because many of the individuals did not have a hard time with this task (as discussed in the preceding chapter). Once again, the passage of time helped make this task of lesser importance. It was easy for some earlier in the marriage and for others it was easy because any difficultly with the task was so long ago. In the case of 4-W, it was something that was never even thought about:

> Separating from family of origin was easy because it already happened. Nothing changed because of my marriage to 4-H in terms of the relationships I had with my siblings or my parents. This task was completed on my own before I even considered getting married so I didn't have to do it again when I got married.

For 1-W there was a difference between separating and then having support from the family of origin. In this case separation was easy as a task:

> Separation from the family of origin, like I said earlier, has never really been something that we needed to do. Our parents never attempted to tell us how to live our lives or what decisions to make. It wasn't something that we ever discussed- not spending so much time with your parents, or don't listen to what your father had to say- or anything like that. They were always very helpful and supportive. So as far as separation, that was pretty far down there.

Two individuals, 2-H and 1-H, said that this task was initially important (not high enough to be in the top three), but after a few years or after the separation was achieved, it moved to the bottom of importance. The both felt that after they had separated from the family of origin and their wives had separated the task was more or less complete and did not need to be revisited.

Conclusions for Bottom Two Tasks

Overall, these bottom two tasks (i.e., keeping in mind why and how you originally fell in love and separating from the family of origin) ranked in the bottom of importance of the nine tasks developed by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995). After years of marriage, the individuals were still in love with their spouses, but in different ways than how they originally loved them. Time brought about changes. Additionally there was a strong emphasis that it was not how they fell in love, rather what they did after they fell in love that was important. For the task of separating from the family of origin, many individuals had already separated from their families, or had families that did not intrude into their marriage. A few individuals commented on how the task was initially important early in the marriage, but at the time of the interview the task had long since been completed and now was ranked at the bottom in terms of importance.

Concluding Remarks for Sub-Question B

There was a hierarchy that developed from this study where three tasks were ranked as most important and two tasks were ranked as least important. The important tasks, providing comfort and support, keeping a sense of humor and shared interests, and building togetherness, intimacy, and autonomy, became a very important base for the marriage. These three tasks often overlapped and the individuals in the study commented

on how those three tasks made the rest of the tasks possible. Without the support, interests, or togetherness of their spouse, the individuals would not even be married or see the point in getting married. Many of the other tasks might increase or decrease in importance, but those three were always present, and never changed from being the most important. This also reflects where the participants are from a developmental standpoint in their marriage. Each of these top three tasks were very similar in the theme of companionship or desire to be close to their spouse. Couples that have been married for 25 years or more are generally going to be close to or in retirement and as a result will have more time to spend with each other.

For the two bottom tasks, keeping in mind why and how you fell in love, and separating from the family of origin, the individuals felt they were important but they were consistently ranked them as the bottom two. The main reason for this was these two tasks happened early on in the marriage and after 25 or more years of marriage they loved their spouse for who they were now not who they were when they first met. They also had separated from their families a long time ago.

Sub-Question (C): Do the Definitions of Each Task Remain the Same or Have They Changed Since 1995?

The nine tasks developed by Wallerstein and Blakeslee were developed and published in 1995. How have the definitions of these tasks changed in the past 12 years? For the most part the definitions had remained the same. The differences that were found reflect a change in definition, and maybe a change in the format of the tasks themselves. There were three notable changes in the definitions to the following tasks: (1) task one,

separating from the family of origin, (2) task seven, keeping a sense of humor and shared interests, and (3) task nine, keeping in mind why and how you originally fell in love.

First Change – Separating from Family of Origin

The first change was in task one, separating from the family of origin. According to Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995), this task focuses on the couple separating psychologically from their family of origin rather than moving away or having physical distance from their family of origin. The individuals that were interviewed in this study often commented that the physical distance was a big factor in being able to psychologically separate. In fact, over half (7 of 12) of the individuals cited distance as a reason they were able to complete and achieve this task. Even though Wallerstein and Blakeslee did not emphasis distance, it played a large factor in this study and it needed to be addressed in this task.

Also, there was an example of an individual who did not agree that she ever separated from her family of origin. For 3-W it was not important or even needed to separate. She explained:

> See I don't get that part. We didn't really separate. We still include the family. The families are very close. My sister knew his sister. We liked being close to our families psychologically and physically.

Although this couple and individual did start some new traditions it was the idea of having to separate that was bothersome. For individual 1-W it was similar, her comment

> It was not hard to separate from my family of origin, but support from our families was real important.

The change in definition that becomes apparent is it is not "separation from the family of origin" without support of the family, rather "creating a new family identity."

This does not say how or to what degree an individual or couple needs to separate from their families of origin. The word "separation" made many individuals respond in terms of physical distance, or even get somewhat defensive in wanting to say they did not have to separate. Calling it "creating a new family identity" allows the individual to combine as much or as little from their family of origin as they wish and also lets distance play a factor as well.

Second Change — Keeping a Sense of Humor and Shared Interests

The next change was task seven, keeping a sense of humor and shared interests. This task was often difficult to discuss because the individual would often talk about either a sense of humor, or shared interests, but the two do not really go together. Sometimes having a sense of humor was a shared interest, or the individual might joke about some of their shared interests, but this task needs to be separated into two distinct and separate tasks. A sense of humor has a lot more to do with an individual's approach to communication and, in some cases, approach to life as a whole. 4-H felt:

Humor is one of the greatest ways to release stress. Life without humor is dull. Shared interests involves communication but was more of an active part of the marriage or a reason for being with one's spouse as 3-H said, "If you don't have shared interests why come home?"

There was a noticeable split in the individuals when they were asked about this task. Almost half (7 of 12) started talking about shared interests and had to be prompted to discuss what role a sense of humor played in their marriage. Others (5 of 12) started discussing what a sense of humor means in their marriage and then had to be prompted about shared interests. The way in which this task was discussed by the participants in

this study caused it to feel like two different tasks. In the interviews, I asked about one, then the other because not one individual discussed them together. A sense of humor deals more with communication and personality an individual brings to the marriage, and shared interest's deals more with activities and what the couple does together. Because of this distinction, it might be more effective to split this task.

Third Change – Keeping in Mind Why and How You Originally Fell in Love

The final change was with task nine, keeping in mind why and how you originally fell in love. The biggest change that was noticed was how the individual answered what that task meant in their marriage. Many individuals (8 of 12) just recounted their first date, or how they met, or what they initially found attractive in their spouse. While it was fun to hear about and many said they enjoyed remembering it, none of the individuals felt that remembering how and why they fell in love did anything for their current situation. For 6-W remembering the how and why would not help the current situation:

> We are such different people now, he is not the same person, nor am I. So remembering who we were is nice, but we do things differently now than back then.

This task, never came across as much of a task, or even needed for the 12 individuals to remain in love or in their marriage. Remembering the past was nice, and in some cases it served as a reminder that they both still had some of the same interests, or even values as when they first fell in love, but it was never something they had to constantly remember. Those couples whose love changed, or whose interests changed over the years, were not any more or less in love than the individuals who seemed to be the same as when they were first in love.

Concluding Remarks For Sub-Question (C)

Since Wallerstein and Blakeslee developed the nine tasks of a good marriage in 1995 there are not too many changes found in this study conducted in 2007. There are three discussed changes. First, for task one, separating from the family of origin, it was important for the individuals to discuss how distance played a role in their separations. Also, there was a need to differentiate between separating and yet maintaining support from ones family as well. Naming the task "creating a new family identity" might help clarify some of these issues. The second change was to task seven, keeping a sense of humor and shared interest. This task was too broad and needs to be divided up into two different tasks. Keeping a sense of humor was seen as an approach to life, a way of communicating, and also a part of an individual's personality. Shared interests involved more of an activity approach and less with communication. Making these two tasks separate also make sense because the individuals were already discussing them in a separate format during the interviews. Finally, task nine, keeping in mind why and how you originally fell in love, was not seen as that much of a task. For a lot of individuals it was a time to remember and reflect on how the fell in love, but that memory did not really serve any purpose in where the individual currently stands with their spouse. Often, time and a change in how and why they love their spouse made that task obsolete or even irrelevant to how they currently view their marriage. Overall, with the exception of the three items mentioned above, the tasks of Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) remain well defined and self-explanatory for those couples interviewed in 2007.

Member Check

A member check is when the researcher asks for feedback about the data collected and conclusions that were drawn from the participants in a study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This strategy allows a researcher to reduce the possibility of misinterpretation of the data that were gathered and analyzed. Maxwell (1996) cautioned, "It is important not to assume that the participants' pronouncements are necessarily valid; their responses should be taken simply as evidence regarding the validity of your account" (p. 94). At the conclusion of this study, I asked the 12 participants about the findings and themes that were developed. Their feedback was noted and is presented in this section.

In order to conduct the member check, the individual participants were contacted and allowed to read and discuss the themes developed from the study. Most of the participants (8 of 12) had very little to say other than the themes were accurate as far as they knew. 1-H commented:

> They look good. I really like the inclusion of compromise as a task. I think you need all of these tasks, and I am sure there are more a person could always add if they looked hard enough, but I think you've got it covered.

6-W also discussed the themes of the study:

> The first nine tasks are pretty straightforward. Obviously they are important. I agree that separating from the family of origin needs to have an addition about physical distance. Travel was such a part of our marriage over the holidays, if we lived closer to his or my parents I often wonder how that would have changed our marriage.

Some participants (6 of 12) were very brief. Comments like, "It looks good to me," "it sounds better the way you say it," or "makes sense to me" were said on more than one occasion. When asked if the themes made sense and accurately reflected what they were

saying, a common answer was “yes.” All of the participants were pleased with the themes and there were no suggested changes or disagreements with what was developed.

The other participants (4 of 12) had more to say and also came up with more examples of things they had thought of after the interview. These stories often helped support the existing themes and did not result in the addition of any new themes. 3-W said:

> I remember a time when 3-H was gone on a lot of trips after we got married. It really bugged me. It was kind of a theme in our relationship because we dated when I was in high school and he was in college. I guess remembering that kind of helped me think that he often is gone on trips but always comes home. It took a few years but like this theme here of “time” had to be a major component in our marriage so I wouldn’t freak out with him being gone a lot.

2-H had this to say:

> Well, it’s like this. I’ve got 43 years of marriage, stories, and experiences to share. I can always remember more things or even change them based on my mood. The themes you have here are pretty consistent though. It’s not that I have always done these tasks, but if you want to stay married you’ll come back to these, like compromise, love, and planning for the future. You’ve got them all here. The trick is to actually do something with them. You have to use them for it to be worth a damn.

The member check was helpful in reviewing findings of this study with the actual participants in the study. No major thematic adjustments or disagreements were noted by the participants.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter answered the three parts of research question number two: In regards to the theoretical framework utilized in this study (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995), (a) What additional tasks are identified that extend the set of developmental tasks?, (b) Is there some hierarchy that becomes evident from the data collected in this

study to demonstrate that the tasks can be arranged from most important to least important?, and (c) Do the definitions of each task remain the same or have they changed since 1995?

For sub-question A, there were four new tasks that were developed as a result of this study, they were: (1) the ability to compromise, (2) having outside support, (3) planning for the future, and (4) having similar backgrounds. The ability to compromise had two main components, being able to give and take, and also learning how to compromise. Having outside support focused on the types of outside support available and how that support helped sustain the marriage. The third task, planning for the future, involved a couple looking at their financial future as well as maintaining a vision of who they are as a couple years down the road. Finally, having similar backgrounds involved having a better chance of remaining married if a couple had the same goals before they were married and they continued to share this background throughout their marriage.

For sub-question B, the hierarchy that was formed discovered on the three tasks ranked most important and the two tasks ranked least important. The three highest ranking tasks were: (1) providing comfort and support to each other; (2) keeping a sense of humor and shared interest; and (3) building togetherness, intimacy, and autonomy in one's marriage. Providing comfort and support was ranked high because for many individuals it was the cornerstone for getting married. Keeping a sense of humor and shared interests was what kept the marriage fun and helped keep the couple interested in each other and doing things together. Finally, building togetherness, intimacy, and autonomy was important for each individual to feel a part of the marriage and also to maintain that sense of self and their own individual worth.

The two tasks ranked least important were: (1) keeping in mind why and how you originally fell in love, and (2) separating from the family of origin. Keeping in mind why and how one fell in love was not as important because after years of marriage the individuals often loved their spouse differently and also felt that it was more important what they did after falling in love than how they did that. In separating from the family of origin, many individuals had separated prior to marriage, and some had families that were non-intrusive as well.

For sub-question C, there were three changes to the original definitions Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) developed. First, separation from the family needed to include physical distance and also a clear understanding of how a married couple creates a new identity and can still receive as much or as little support from their family of origin as they choose. Secondly, keeping a sense of humor and shared interests was too broad a topic and needed to be separated out. A sense of humor was seen as more of a form of communication and personality type, whereas shared interests was seen as activities and ways the couple did things together. Finally, keeping in mind why and how you originally fell in love was a task many individuals could recall, but had very little relevance for how they currently lived their lives or loved their spouse.

A member check was performed after the themes were developed from the data. None of the participants disagreed or had any changes to the findings. Additional stories that would help support the themes were provided in some cases. Most of the answers were brief and affirmed that the themes developed matched the participants' viewpoint.

Chapter 6

Concluding Discussion

Chapter Introduction

This chapter is organized into four sections. The first section discusses the contributions this study has added to Wallerstein and Blakeslee's (1995) nine developmental tasks. The second section discusses this study's relationship to existing research. The third section discusses this study's limitations and directions for future research. The final section reflects on the six couples of the study and offers some final thoughts about the study.

New Contributions to the Wallerstein and Blakeslee's (1995) Nine Developmental Tasks of a Good Marriage

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) offered nine developmental tasks that were found in their study of a variety of couples in a "good marriage." There were three significant findings, or over-arching themes, that this study brought to light about how a couple and each individual of that couple develop a long-term marriage. Wallerstein and Blakeslee do not mention any overriding qualities or characteristics that are needed in order for a couple to approach the nine tasks; however, this study developed three. The three overriding components this study found are: (1) the ability to communicate, (2) the influence of time, and (3) the power of love. A couple that communicates is one that wants to both talk and listen to each other and what is going on in their marriage. Once a couple has communicated their needs, they also need to allow a realistic amount of time to pass in order for these changes to take place. Finally, love, a desire to actually want these things to happen must be present. If you are willing to talk and listen, and let time

go by, but you do not care about the other person, then nothing is going to happen. That is why each of these components must be present in order for any and all of the nine tasks developed by Wallerstein and Blakeslee to be fulfilled.

Communication

A couple's ability to communicate is crucial for each of the nine tasks identified by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995). Each task has an element of communication to it. For example, the first task of separating from family of origin forces a couple to discuss where they want to live, how much influence they are going to allow their in-laws or family to have on their marriage, and other factors. In order for a couple to comfort and support each other they must talk to each other and communicate what needs they have and how they need to be comforted. As 4-W stated:

> It was usually communication, the recognition that we could talk about it, about anything. Knowing that made everything much easier in our marriage.

Being able to discuss and find a solution that both the individual and their spouse could live with had to take place. As 5-H commented:

> You sit down and say, okay, what do you want, what do I want, let's get it out there. You have to be able to sit down and discuss it as adults. Whether it's a fight, or just a normal discussion you've got to have that in order to continue the communication process to keep the marriage going on an even keel.

Being able to communicate was not always easy, for many couples it was something that was learned over the years of marriage. When 6-W was asked about what caused the biggest problems in her marriage the answer was communication:

> Whenever there was a problem there'd be a breakdown in communication, and it would need to be reestablished. Communication was everything in a relationship, because the minute you stop communicating, then you drift apart. You make assumptions that aren't true, or you misinterpret things and whatnot. When we

> had a breakdown in communication we would have to work to reestablish it first in order to then approach the problem.

When a couple did not communicate nothing was accomplished in the marriage. The nine tasks could not be approached when the couple was not listening and talking to each other. The problem still existed and could not be solved until communication was re-established, 3-H explained:

> I think I've gone months without talking to her. Whatever the issue was, I would handle it by just not talking. Like two ships passing at night. But then ultimately we would calm down and we come to our senses and discuss it. You start to evaluate whether the reward is worth the fight, meaning, resolving the issue is the goal, not being wrong or right. You have to be able to communicate first in order to even get to that point.

Communication was the first of three components needed for each individual to approach the nine tasks developed by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995). Being able to talk to one's spouse allowed for feelings, thoughts, wishes, and desires to be voiced and listened to by the other member of the couple. When a breakdown in communication occurred, none of the tasks could be approached by either member of the couple.

Time

This brings us to the second major theme, that of time. As evidenced by the participants in this study, the passage of time was also important in all of these marriages. Time was often mentioned as a healer, friend, and even a benchmark for the individuals of the study. With the passing of time and the number of years married, the individuals got to know themselves and also their spouse better with each passing year. 1-H described it like this:

> If I let time work on a problem, and a few days pass and it's still a problem I'll talk about it now. I learned that with age, when I was younger I would have had to talk about it right then.

Time also gives the individual comfort in knowing they have been through so much with their spouse, that the current problem or situation is not impossible. As 6-W said:

> I've known him for so long, we kind of understand now what the other needs. Now I know when he wants to talk, or just to vent, or just to leave him alone.

Finally, time can act as a wonderful healer. For these individuals, the amount of time they have spent together gives them more patience and a better understanding of each other. 2-H described the importance of time in his marriage:

> Time has been wonderful for our marriage. I don't know why but it is. I guess because we feel comfortable with each other all the time, I guess we just let that ride it out. We don't say anything, and go on about our daily business. With time, you forget and forgive. Time cures a lot of ills.

Love

It was amazing how much each individual loved his/her spouse, yet it was never said overtly very much. Words like, respect, caring, support, and puts up with me all translated into love. For these couples, it appeared that those other descriptors (e.g., respect, support, caring) were the specific types of love they received from their spouse. It appeared that saying they loved their spouse was not enough or did not fully explain how much they cared or appreciated their spouse.

Having love allowed each individual to approach the nine tasks with almost certain eagerness. When you love someone you want to comfort and support them, you want to find ways to build togetherness, intimacy, and autonomy. Each of the nine tasks for the individuals was approached with an element of love. For 1-H, it was described as follows:

> They always said marriage is a decision. How much you love is a decision. You decide to love somebody everyday. You decide to accept them every day of your lives. That's true. If you don't do that, that's what makes it fall apart. I think we've been very comfortable in our marriage, and we love each other everyday.

The love of one's spouse also makes life more enjoyable and more meaningful. Doing things for love was also much easier than doing something for obligation sake, or even being asked. For 6-W love was what made her want to get and stay married:

> Well, I married for love. There was something about talking with him that it was like he could see my soul and see me for who I was, and he loved what he saw. And it was the same thing with him, that here was someone who is a really good person, and I just found him — and I just looked at it, and I went, "I wanna go through the rest of my life with this person."

Summary

These three overriding components of communication, time, and love were all needed in order for every individual to work with their spouse on the nine tasks developed by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995). Every task needed both members of the couple to communicate about their wants, needs, and thoughts. Time was the second component where over the years the individuals learned what their spouse wanted or needed. The passage of time acted as a healer and also helped keep the big picture in mind when lots of little annoyances in life were happening. The more time that passed, the more a couple could look back on how they approach and work the nine tasks. Finally, love was crucial for each of the nine tasks. Each of the individuals loved his/her spouse and it was shown in their actions, discussions, and their desire to accomplish each of the tasks over the 25 or more years of their marriage.

Relationship to Existing Research

This study has a variety of similarities and also add new support to the existing research on long-term marriages. In a number of ways this study is very similar to other studies on long-term marriages (Fields, 1983, Fincham, Palerai, & Regalia, 2002; Kaslow & Robinson, 1996). Similarities include the participants who were white, middle class couples. The methodology was also similar in that it relied on convenience sampling through couples referred to the researcher. The findings of this study help support a lot of the findings in existing research. Alford-Cooper (1998) compiled data on over 500 couples and identified eight characteristics that helped the marriages stay intact. Of the eight, three of the components included: a loving relationship, good communication, and trust. This study was similar in identifying communication, time, and love as the three main components needed in a long-term marriage. Bachand and Caron's (2001) study also cited love as a main factor that contributed to a long-term marriage. Klagsbrun's (1985) study identified the cherished/shared history of the couple as one factor that helped keep a couple in a long term marriage. This finding was very similar to my own theme of time, where the couple has a long history to draw upon to help keep them together.

Following in the path of Wallerstein and Blakeslee's (1995) work on developmental tasks, I was able to also determine four new tasks important in a long-term marriage. The ability to compromise, having outside support, planning for the future, and having similar backgrounds were not in the existing nine tasks of Wallerstein and Blakeslee. The addition of these four tasks helps to strengthen the existing theory started by Wallerstein and Blakeslee. Each of these tasks are consistent with the requirements

that Wallerstein and Blakeslee used for their original nine tasks. The new tasks are developmental and can constantly be worked on throughout the marriage, a couple can reflect on past experience where they have used the task, and each of these tasks can be used to cope and overcome a challenge of life they might encounter with their spouse.

These new tasks also contribute to the existing research. Some researchers have discussed these four new tasks as characteristics of a long-term marriage, but not as a developmental task. For example, White's (2004) study found that having a similar background or similar interests was a main factor in having a long-term marriage. Lauer and Lauer (1986) discussed compromise as a factor in a long-term marriage, and Kaslow and Robison (1996) cited love as a large factor in long-term marriage. These studies did not discuss how these factors can be a developmental task that is constantly worked on throughout the marriage.

Another contribution to the Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) tasks, is the development of a hierarchy and updating of the existing definitions of the nine tasks. The nine tasks, according to Wallerstein and Blakeslee, were not ranked in any way. They were developed as a framework for studying long-term marriages. Adding a hierarchy helps further develop this framework giving researchers some guidance regarding which tasks may be more important than others. For those couples married over 25 years, this study showed that the tasks of building togetherness, intimacy, and autonomy, keeping a sense of humor and shared interests, and providing comfort and support to each other, were more important than keeping in mind why and how one fell in love and separating from the family of origin. This finding can only be used as a guideline for future studies, and is not definitive, but rather suggestive as to a hierarchy of tasks.

Updating the definitions of the nine tasks was another contribution of this research. In the 12 years since Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) first developed these tasks, some of the definitions have changed. Ultimately, the nine tasks remain well defined and were easily understood by the majority of the participants in the study. The only main changes are: (1) including physical distance and the degree to which a person separates from their family of origin; (2) dividing the seventh task into two separate tasks — keeping a sense of humor and maintaining shared interests; and (3) recognizing that the task of keeping in mind how and why you originally fell in love did not have the same impact or importance for each couple as suggested by Wallerstein and Blakeslee.

Limitations and Future Research

This study could benefit from a variety of improvements. First, increasing the number of interviews would be an asset. The time an money needed to follow a couple around for a significantly longer period of time could potentially yield more consistent and reliable conclusions. Due to a lack of time and funding, additional interviews were not possible for this study. The data could also be analyzed from a variety of different aspects. Comparing the different couples based on when they were married is also a future possibility. Researchers could investigate if there is there a difference between the couples married in the 60s versus the 70s. Another possible research question would be is there a difference between what and how the men answered the nine tasks versus how the women answered the nine tasks? Factors such as age when married, socio-economic status, race, religion, and education can be analyzed for their impact on the development of a long-term marriage.

This study would also benefit from additional data sources. Although some observations were made, it would help to have observation data to more completely triangulate the interview data. Also, interviewing the married couple together as well as separate might yield some additional information that would help this study. A final aspect that would help with this study is interviewing additional participants who have divorced to find out if they did or did not follow the nine tasks developed by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995). Having a married group and a divorce group would make comparing the use and importance of the tasks easier and could be very beneficial to add to the hierarchy or creating additional tasks in the future.

Reflections on the Six Couples

For a long time I have wondered about what makes a marriage last? So much of the research I have come across discussed factors of divorce, or how marriages end, but I wanted to study what makes them work. My review of the literature helped guide me to Cuber and Haroff's (1965) research on the six marital types, to Weishaus and Field's (1988) work on marriages lasting over 50 years. It was Wallerstein and Blakeslee's (1995) book, *The Good Marriage,* that really resonated with me. The idea of studying marriage from a developmental standpoint made a lot more sense than just analyzing individual characteristics or indicators of a long-term marriage. You have to work at marriage — explore, practice, and try new things in order to improve it. Without maintenance, the skills you have will get rusty or fade with time. A developmental look at marriage offered nine tasks that need to be performed throughout the entire marriage in order for it to have a chance at lasting.

In doing this study I was able to talk to six unique and different couples. As I analyzed and discussed the data, I really felt like each individual gave me important insights into their marriage, and a look at how marriage as a whole works.

For 1-H it was a matter of putting someone else's needs above his own. He was very caring and I can recall the smile on his face and excitement about remembering and discussing his marriage. His wife was more reserved but shared the same excitement which was in her eyes and more private. She was honest about having to learn how to share and be a part of a couple.

Couple two was very intriguing. This couple was very close especially since the husband is sick and has had difficulty with his health. 2-H was very business like in his discussions about finances and the importance of money in a marriage. His wife (2-W) was the constant supporter of her husband but still had the autonomy to do as she wished. Of course, she often wished to just be with her husband.

Couple three was loud and often interrupted each other. They played a lot, had their own jokes, and did not seem to care if anyone else understood these jokes as long as they did. 3-H often claimed he did not know the answer, or was not a "deep thinker," but he offered valuable insight into how conflict can be a good thing. During fights he learned sometimes to just shut up because it was not worth arguing. His wife laughed about how she spent the money and raised the kids, but also was fiercely loyal and proud of her husband and their family.

Couple four was an intellectual couple that looked and acted the part of soul mates. Their responses were always well crafted and I felt like they showed their love for each other with every response. 4-H was often deeply reflective and appreciative of the

space he was granted by his wife and the space he granted her. He often seemed to instinctively know what his wife would want or need, even during times of crisis. 4-W loved the fact that she found someone who let her maintain autonomy when she needed it, but also had someone who would always support her and be there if she needed it.

Couple five was a couple that showed me even if you have trouble in a marriage it can still last over 25 years. The wife (5-W) admitted that the marriage was not always "peachy keen" but having a strong friendship and even being a bit stubborn helped get through the bad times. For her, the good times of the marriage are now. Time helped the marriage grow and develop into something they both now really enjoy. For the husband (5-H), it was admitting that he could not do it all on his own. Learning to share, open up and be a part of something greater than himself. Also, learning that his way of doing things is not the only way made me realize you have to be open to change.

Finally, couple six helped to inspire me to see how maturity plays a role in a marriage. For 6-H, it was learning what was important not only to himself but also to his spouse and the marriage. 6-H explained how he had to learn to grow up and put his needs second at times and his wife's needs first. For 6-W it was being able to listen, talk, and discuss without passing judgment. I also like how she was able to look at a problem or situation from another point of view rather than insisting on everything being seen from her point of view.

Reflections on the Research Questions and Findings

This study provided answers to two research questions. First, how does each individual of the couple demonstrate approaching the nine tasks that contribute to long-term marriage? Each of the nine tasks was broken down and analyzed individually. For

task one, separating from the family of origin, two themes were discussed. These included: the degree of difficulty involved in separating and how the individual developed a new family identity. For task two, building togetherness, intimacy, and autonomy, four components were discussed. These included: having common interests, balancing the "I" and "we" aspects of their lives, supporting their spouses "I" needs and wants, and discussing how this task occurs in a marriage. Task three, maintaining privacy while becoming a parent, discussed the two components of how issues of privacy changed with a child and ways the individual maintained some privacy in the relationship. The fourth task, confront and master crises of life, dealt with the themes of health issues and dealing with a crisis as a team. Task five, creating a safe haven to allow for conflict, focused on three main components: disagreements are needed and productive, confidence in the marriage to disagree, and picking and choosing one's battles. Task six included establishing and maintaining a worthwhile sexual relationship and focused on two components: sex versus intimacy and how intimacy has changed over the course of the marriage. Task seven, keep a sense of humor and shared interests, explored joy or happiness in a marriage. Task eight, provide comfort and support to each other, looked at two components: the kind of support given and received from a spouse, and how support leads to an increase in togetherness for the couple. Finally, task nine, keep in mind why and how you originally fell in love, discussed how an individual's initial attraction played a role in the marriage and the importance of remembering but not dwelling on the past.

Findings related to the second research question were divided into three parts. The first part discussed the four additional tasks that were identified by the participants in

this study. Those new tasks were the ability to compromise, having an outside support network of family and friends, planning for the future, and coming from similar backgrounds. The second part of this question discussed the hierarchy of the nine tasks. The three most important tasks were building togetherness, intimacy, and autonomy; keeping a sense of humor and shared interests; and providing comfort and support to each other. The two tasks ranked at the bottom included keeping in mind why and how you originally fell in love and separating from the family of origin. Finally, the third part of this question dealt with changes in definitions of three tasks. First, separation from the family of origin should include notions of physical distance and also allow the individual to decide the degree to which they separate. The second change in definition involved splitting up task seven into keeping a sense of humor and providing support to each other. The final change was to task nine, keeping in mind why and how you originally fell in love. This task is important, but for many individuals it was not considered a task, rather, an event that took place. It was not something that they continuously worked at or reflected upon as the marriage progressed.

Each of these findings resulted from three main findings of a long-term marriage. First, the couple must have communication. In order for the tasks to be worked on, the couple must be able to talk, listen, and understand what the other person is saying. Second, the couple must let time play a factor. With the passing of every day, the couple gains experience and something to look back upon to draw courage and strength. Finally, the third theme is love. Loving one's spouse is important because it helps you look forward to the being in the marriage and with your spouse. A lasting marriage has many

components, but communication, time and love are three that are crucial for any long-term marriage.

Concluding Remarks

It is often easy to point out what is wrong or needs improvement in society. Divorce is a subject that is often discussed and researched, but these studies focus on what went wrong with the marriage. This study attempted to learn what works in a marriage. Six couples, each married for more than 25 years, took the time to discuss what has and, in some cases, has not worked in their marriage and how they have remained married for so long. Many of their stories were inspiring with discussions of both the good and bad times these couples have had throughout their long marriages. When asked about how he felt about his marriage over the years, 6-H put it best when he said:

> You know, you look back on it and it's life. And it can be a real pain in the ass or you can have a lot of fun doing it. And this has been a lot of fun; had ups and downs and all that, but yeah, it's nice. I wouldn't trade it for anything.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
IRB Approval Letter

THE UNIVERSITY of TENNESSEE
Institutional Review Board
Office of Research
1534 White Avenue
Knoxville, TN 37996-1529
Phone: (865) 974-3466
Fax: (865) 974-7400

12/21/2006

IRB#: 7220 B

TITLE: A Case Study of the Development of Long-Term Marriages Lasting 25 Years or More

Gnilka, Alexander
Educational Psychology and Counseling
2218 Piedmont Street
Knoxville, TN 37921

Anfara Jr., Vincent
Theory and Practice in Teacher Education
A-321 Claxton Addition
Campus

Your project listed above was reviewed and has been granted approval under Expedited review.

This approval is for a period ending one year from the date of this letter. Please make timely submission of renewal or prompt notification of project termination (see item #3 below).

Responsibilities of the investigator during the conduct of this project include the following:

1. To obtain prior approval from the Committee before instituting any changes in the project.
2. To retain signed consent forms from subjects for at least three years following completion of the project.
3. To submit a Form D to report changes in the project or to report termination at 12-month or less intervals.

The Committee wishes you every success in your research endeavor. This office will send you a renewal notice (Form R) prior to the anniversary or your approval date.

Sincerely,

Brenda Lawson
Compliances

Appendix B

Information and Consent Form

As a student in the Counselor Education Ph.D. program, I am currently collecting data for my doctoral dissertation. The topic of my research is the experience of long-term marriages lasting 25 years or longer. The purpose of the research is to gain an understanding of what creates a lasting marriage and to contribute to the existing literature on marriage and family studies. I am interested in hearing about your unique experience of being in a lasting marriage in order to understand what the experience is like for you.

Specifically, your participation in this project will include a one to two hour audio taped interview, during which I will ask you to tell me about your marriage. I have enclosed a list of the questions that I will ask during the interview (see attached). The audiotapes are used to ensure accuracy and clarity. My goal is to understand as much as possible about your experience, so I will ask follow-up or clarifying questions about the things you say that I don't understand. These questions will not be on the interview list, but are asked to make sure both of us feel satisfied that your experience has been communicated as fully as possible. I will also ask you for some basic demographic information: your gender, age, date of marriage, race or ethnicity, state where they were married, age when married, number of children (if any), and age of children (if any).

From the audiotape of your interview, I will prepare an interview transcript that I can study. I will compare all completed transcripts and try to develop common themes from all the couples I interview. Dr. Vincent Anfara who is chairing my dissertation, will also have access to the transcripts for assistance in analyzing the data. The information obtained will be held in the strictest confidence. All audiotapes, transcripts, and any other data will be coded by number and will be identifiable only through a master list. I am the only person who will have access to this master list, which will be kept locked in a secure place along with the tapes and transcripts. This signed consent form will be kept in a locked file separate from the location where the tapes, transcripts, and master list are stored. Access to the audiotape of your interview will be restricted to me. I promise to maintain confidentially. Upon completion of the research project, the tapes and the master list will be destroyed.

Once I have completed the transcript of your interview, I will provide you with a copy of the interview transcript. I will delete all names, dates, places, and any other potentially identifying information. When you receive your transcript, I would like for you to check it carefully to make sure that it is an accurate account of your experience and of our conversation. Also, I would like for you to make certain that the interview did not leave out any important points you wished to make. Please feel free to make any changes (typographical errors, etc.), mark out sections that you do not want me to include in my research manuscript, or add further comments. We can discuss these as well as any

questions you might have. I will schedule a second interview with you to discuss your comments about the transcript.

It is possible that this study, when completed, will be published or presented in a public forum (e.g., a professional conference). By signing this form, you are consenting not only to participate in the interview but also to all or parts of your interview, as edited and transcribed, to be used in a publication or presentation.

This study is considered a human research project; however, the risk to you for being involved is minimal. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You will choose the experiences that you wish to talk about in the interview. At any time you may discontinue your participation or withdraw from the study without question or penalty. Many people find that exploring their experiences with another person is satisfying. While I cannot promise that this will be the case for you, I hope that it will be.

If you have any questions at this time or at any point later in the study, please do not hesitate to ask them. If you decide to participate, you will be given a copy of this form to keep. You may contact me at the following address, phone number, or email address any time you have questions or concerns about this project. If you call and do not reach me, I will respond to you as soon as possible.

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I have read the above Information and Consent Form, and I agree to participate in this project. I also agree to have all or parts of my interview, as transcribed and edited, included in any publication or presentation in this study.

Name (printed):_____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix C
Demographic Questionnaire

(1) How long have you been married? _____

(2) When did you get married? _____

(3) What is your gender? M F

(4) What is your current age? _____

(5) What was your age when you married? _____

(6) What was your date of marriage? _____

(7) What is your race or ethnicity? _____

(8) In which state were you married? _____

(9) Did you have children? _____ If yes how many?_____

(10) How many times have you been married? _____

Appendix D
Interview Protocol

[See appendix E for a listing of the developmental tasks developed by Wallerstein & Blakeslee (1995).]

Grand Tour Question: Tell me what has it been like being married for all these years?

Part I

(1) What does this task mean to you?

(2) What are some ways this was handled early in your marriage?

(3) What are some ways this is handled currently in your marriage?

(4) How important has this been in your marriage? What are some examples?

Part II

(1) Now that all nine tasks have been discussed, explain which tasks have been utilized the most in your marriage?

(2) Which of the tasks have been utilized the least? Explain?

(3) What possible new tasks can you identify and share that have not been discussed?

(4) Please rank order the nine tasks from most important to least important as they pertain to your marriage.

Final Question: After all of this discussion about your marriage, what concluding or final thoughts do you have?

Appendix E
Developmental Tasks of a Marriage

(1) **Separation from the family of origin** – This task requires a couple to separate psychologically from their family of origin. Emotional ties and family roles that many people grew up with need to be shifted and created anew within the marriage. The couple begins to rely on their own judgment to make decisions regarding the marriage.

(2) **Building togetherness, intimacy, and autonomy** – The couple starts to share a vision of how they want to spend their lives and remain committed to one another. They move from the "I" stage of adulthood (I want this, I want that) to the "we" stage of marriage. This task involves balancing what is best for you, your spouse, and the marriage.

(3) **Maintain privacy while becoming a parent** – The couple has to balance the relationship between their spouse along with their relationship with their child. This task looks at how a couple keeps time for themselves and their marriage as well as giving time and attention to their children.

(4) **Confront and master crises of life** – This task is broad and focuses on difficult times in marriage. A crisis can be directly related to being married, or an event that is unrelated to the marriage itself, but still creates a hardship. The crisis can be long or short term, predicted or unpredicted. This task involves a couple understanding and acknowledging what and how they respond in a time of need or hardship.

(5) **Create a safe haven to allow for conflict** – A couple may often find that they do not agree on particular topic and need an understanding that they can disagree with their spouse. It is important that the couple understand they can disagree and understand how to fight or argue without it resulting in the end of the marriage.

(6) **Establish and maintain a worthwhile sexual relationship** – This task involves around couples maintaining intimacy and sex throughout their marriage. This task is not focused just on the issue of sex, rather closeness and intimacy as the couple defines it.

(7) **Keep a sense of humor and shared interests** – For this task, the focus is on everyday life communication and contact. In this task the couple keeps a connection in their everyday life through humor and jokes. It also includes hobbies, interests, and pastimes the couple enjoys together.

(8) **Provide comfort and support to each other** – Providing emotional support and comfort is one of the main aspects of a marriage. This is where each member of the marriage gives nurturing to the marriage and their spouse providing relief, sympathy, encouragement, or support depending on the situation.

(9) **Keep in mind why and how you originally fell in love** – This is described as having a "double vision" of the marriage. The couple keeps in mind why and how they fell in love and use this in the present to support and carry on in their marriage. The couple is able to remember past times and use that knowledge and experience with their present situation.

VITA

Alexander Seabury Gnilka (Alex) was born in Charlotte, NC on March 5, 1978. He attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and received a B.A. with a double major in History and Peace, War and Defense in 2000. From there, Alex attended Wake Forest University, receiving a Masters of Fine Arts in Education in the field of Counseling in 2004. Alex completed his doctorate in Counselor Education at the University of Tennessee in 2007.