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Creating High-Quality Marriages: A Qualitative Study of Religious Couples

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CREATING HIGH-QUALITY MARRIAGES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF RELIGIOUS COUPLES

by

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ABSTRACT

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This study is a qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews with thirty-two couples who have been married for eight years. Although the couples in this sample have similar religious, economic, and cultural backgrounds, the quality of each marriage is quite different. Ten couples have exceptionally high-quality marriages, eighteen have average-quality marriages, three are struggling, and one couple has been divorced. The purpose of this study was to better understand what the ten couples with high-quality marriages are doing to create successful relationships. I conclude that high-quality marriages are created by a couple's participation in a particular process with a

specific paradigm that facilitates a critical characteristic. I also postulate that high-quality marriages are undergirded by three guiding principles.

A couple's environment, circumstance, and parental role models constitute the framework from which marital decisions spring, but for the respondents in this study, contextual issues by themselves neither explained nor were consistently associated with marital quality. The ten couples with the best marriages participate in a *process* of covenanting, communicating, and complying to heartfelt marital obligations. They tend to function most consistently from an other-centered *paradigm*, and have the *characteristic* of love as the trademark of their relationships. High-quality marriages are governed by three principles: they are mutually created, require constant nurturing, and are dynamic.

This process, paradigm, and characteristic constitute three important dimensions of high-quality marital relationships. If both couples are making choices from within this imaginary three-dimensional sphere or realm, the result is a high-quality marriage. If one spouse makes choices from within this imaginary sphere while the other spouse chooses options from outside, the resultant quality tends to be average. When both spouses are consistent in making choices outside this sphere, it constitutes the foundation of a low-quality marriage.

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of ideas about covenants, commitments, love, and happiness. Their contagious excitement and selflessness have been great assets in better understanding these aspects of marriage.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Although marital quality has been one of the most widely studied topics in family science (Spanier and Lewis, 1980) and is associated with numerous aspects of our personal well-being (Coombs, 1991; Horwitz, White, and Howell-White, 1996), some family scientists consider the discovery of productive and practical information about marriage an elusive goal and a formidable task that have yet to be accomplished (Snyder, 1982; Nye, 1988; Glenn, 1990). In his fifty-year review of family research, Nye (1988) acknowledges a massive accumulation of marital data but questions its usefulness in helping us understand "why" three in five married couples end in divorce or have marital relationships that are unsatisfactory. Nye's observation is that our current knowledge of the marital phenomenon "is not as productive or useful as we might wish," and then adds "It is a little ironic that in recent decades, while family research and teaching has been expanding rapidly, we have doubled our divorce rate" (p. 312).

The purpose of this study is to better understand the differences between the high-quality marriages and those of less quality, and also describe, in practical terms, what the couples with high-quality marriages are doing to create those kind of relationships.

In the first chapter I explain the significance of accessing marital information that is useful and define several terms considered critical to a clear discussion of this topic. In chapter two, my review of the literature, I

survey significant issues associated with high-quality marriages and propose two different ways of looking at marital relationships. I then specify the research question, design, sample, and procedures for data collection. In the final two chapters I describe the data analysis and explain the implications of these results for practice and research. The premise of this study is that the proposed research design, coupled with a particular perspective of marital relationships, will convey some practical information about how the couples in this sample create high-quality marital relationships as well as heighten understanding about the nature of, and governing principles associated with, high-quality marriages in general.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY

Marital problems in the United States are multiplying considerably faster than research and therapy can address them (Nye, 1988). It is estimated that between one-half and two-thirds of all first marriages will end in divorce, and about two-thirds of these will occur before the tenth wedding anniversary (Cherlin, 1992; Martin and Bumpass, 1989). Each year, 3.5 million individuals (consisting of an average of two adults and one child) in the United States will be directly affected by divorce (Norton & Moorman, 1987). These statistics are staggering, and the financial burden imposed by this trend is enormous, but an even more serious concern is the human costs behind the numbers.

Although it is difficult to quantify the emotional and mental struggles that follow in the wake of divorce, it is well documented that marital disruption among couples in the United States is associated with higher than

average rates of premature deaths, accidental mortality, acute and chronic illness, alcohol abuse, psychiatric disorders, depression, schizophrenia, economic problems, and social adjustment challenges (Larson, Swyers, and Larson, 1994). Many divorced women struggle to rear families, carry burdens beyond their capacity, and will typically experience a decrease in their standard of living that ranges from 17% to 73% during the first year of divorce (McLindon, 1987; Weiss, 1984). Children of divorced parents also pay a particularly severe price. Marital disruption has been correlated with an adverse effect on children's relationships with their parents, self-esteem, peer relationships, academic success, behavioral adjustment, and physical health (Larson, Swyers, and Larson, 1994). The negative consequences of experiencing parental divorce during childhood such as self-pity, vengeance, despair, anguish, guilt, loneliness, fear, distrust, hurt, hostility, anger, and withdrawn behavior can linger well into adulthood (Wallerstein, 1991). It would be naive to assume that a single remedy could completely eliminate the difficulties caused by divorce; however, it is reasonable to conjecture that the discovery and dissemination of certain fundamental aspects of high-quality marriages could help slow it down, or at least provide some shelter from its effects.

We need to be careful that focus on the negative effects of divorce does not blind us to the adverse effects associated with intact but unhappy marriages. It has been reported that about one in seven couples who choose not to divorce have relationships of quiet desperation; they are unfulfilled, lonely, and unhappy (Levinger, 1976; Boland and Follingstad, 1987; Heaton and Albrecht, 1991). Booth and Edwards (1989) explain that greater attention needs to be paid to intact and seemingly enduring marriages that are, in

reality, unhappy: "Nearly every aspect of the family and marital relations examined is adversely affected by living with unhappily married parents" (p. 55). Renne (1971) echoes the same concept: "Unhappily married persons are more susceptible than are other married or divorced persons (of the same sex, race, and approximate age) to physical and psychological health problems" (p. 338). A better perception of the nature of solid, well-functioning marriages might be helpful to couples who are not plagued with an impending divorce, but who are unhappily mired in marital mediocrity.

Glenn and Weaver (1981), reviewing data from six national surveys, found that "for all race and sex sub-populations, a happy marriage seems virtually necessary for a high level of happiness" (p. 161-168). In other words, for most adults, a good marriage is a more important requisite to happiness than anything else, including financial success, prestige, power, and educational achievements. It is important to note that it is not simply "being married" that impacts well-being; rather, it is the quality of the marriage. Good marriages have a strong, positive effect on well-being (Gove, Style, and Hughes, 1990) and have been consistently associated with less alcoholism, fewer suicides, less schizophrenia, fewer psychiatric problems, greater longevity, and better physical health (Coombs, 1991). The importance of clearly understanding practical processes that contribute to the creation of high-quality marriages should be clear.

Because of the fundamental nature of marital happiness to personal and societal well-being, the information derived from this study should help a wide audience. Therapists, public school counselors, family-life educators, intervention agencies, and religious educators could use information about the nature, fundamental features, and practical processes of marital quality to

enhance their educational efforts. State and governmental agencies could profit by carefully considering this type of information prior to and during the process of enacting laws that impact our society. If policy makers were more familiar with the core principles and fundamental realities of marital quality, perhaps the laws and policies they enact would more effectively tap the roots of these issues rather than wasting money on trendy programs that merely hack at the branches. Social scientists could use any of the information extracted from this study as building blocks, supplemental information, or new information to stimulate thinking and generate further research.

DEFINITIONS

Marital Quality

In recent years, the definition of marital quality has undergone several changes (Glenn, 1990), has been associated with a lack of conceptual clarity (Lively, 1996; Hicks and Plat, 1970; Burr, 1973; Spanier and Cole, 1976), and has been "characterized by considerable confusion and disagreement about measurement" (Glenn, 1990, p. 819). This study does not attempt to resolve the disputes or create more widely accepted definitions. However, in view of the conceptual confusion, clarifying any ambiguities concerning the meaning and usage of the term "marital quality" is deemed expedient. Marital quality, as defined herein, represents a global evaluation of many dimensions of a marital relationship, such as marital happiness, satisfaction, and success. It is a couple's subjective definition and assessment of their marital relationship.

A high-quality marriage would, therefore, be associated with a high degree of marital satisfaction, happiness, and success. Lower levels of marital quality would place a couple's evaluation of their marital relationship at some point on an imaginary continuum that falls away from the high end. This definition does not convey a fixed picture of discrete categories but is rather a composite picture or amalgamation of different criteria.

In their analysis, Johnson, Amoloza, and Booth (1992) explain that marital quality has two general characteristics. The first is a dyadic property that is particular to each couple's relationship. Consequently, it is not something that individuals carry over from one marriage to the next. The second characteristic of this phenomenon is its remarkable stability that rivals personality characteristics in its consistency and seems unaffected by either gender or marital duration. They suggest that once a relationship is formed, the quality of that relationship does not fluctuate appreciably in response to minor variations in the family, work demands, or other pressures. Hence, environmental pressures on the relationship would have to be substantial to alter a couple's marital quality.

Johnson, Amoloza, and Booth (1992) use the terms "marital quality" and "marital stability" interchangeably and equate both to "divorce proneness" (p. 586). This study, on the other hand, posits a significant difference between the term "marital quality" and the term "marital stability." According to Lewis and Spanier (1979), Norton (1983), and Fincham and Bradbury (1987), these two terms are not the same. Furthermore, research on marital quality and stability has traditionally been separate, and for the most part it remains so (Glenn, 1990). Lewis and Spanier (1979) define a stable marriage as one that is terminated only by the natural death of a spouse. An unstable marriage is one

that is willfully terminated by one or both spouses. Hence, marital stability refers to the outcome and end of the marriage process. Marital quality, on the other hand, functions as a descriptor of the marital process, not its outcome.

Processes

The term *process*, as used in this study, refers to repeated sequences of behavior in a marital relationship that contribute to a particular result. Some of these behavioral sequences contribute to marital dysfunction; others contribute to marital happiness and success. Most processes, however, are so routine and automatic that we are usually aware of only a small percentage of them. To heighten our awareness of these processes, Burr, Day and Bahr (1989) propose a three-level method of analysis. Level I processes deal with patterns that are commonsense, day-to-day redundancies. They may be as simple as a two-sequence pattern of behavior in which one spouse pushes for more cooperation while the other withdraws, a more complicated process that contains five or six sequences before it repeats itself, a process that involves analogic or nonverbal sequences, or perhaps a process that is a combination of the above.

Level II processes are associated with metalevel analysis that involves stepping back and looking at the whole system. For example, if a couple are discussing possible solutions to specific marital disagreements, they are thinking on level I. If they start thinking about their ways of dealing with disagreements (in general), they have shifted to the next level--level II thinking. This involves thinking about the group or system; thinking about rules that govern rules; or changing general patterns of behavior.

In this study processes are viewed as the behavioral building blocks of marital relationships. Some of the processes in our marital repertoire weaken marital satisfaction, happiness, and success, while other processes tend to strengthen our relationships. The recognition and explication of these building blocks are significant, if not essential, to therapeutic intervention strategies as well as couples' attempts to strengthen their own marital relationships. Furthermore, the recognition and understanding of significant processes in a marital relationship have proven to be a very practical, functional, and useable type of information for both the therapist and client. This study will not only attempt to identify significant processes in marital relationships, but also those representing all three of the different levels.

Paradigms

In the context of marriage, paradigms would be considered to be fundamental, general, enduring, and framing assumptions or beliefs that are developed about the nature and meaning of life (Reiss, 1981). Constantine (1986) explains that these fundamental beliefs are rarely explicit or conscious unless they are temporarily forced to the surface to facilitate a major transition or serious crisis . Consequently, they are difficult to observe directly, and those who study marriage partners cannot easily access them. Nonetheless, an understanding of these paradigms is paramount to both an accurate account of the marital experience, as well as knowing how high-quality marriages are created.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this particular literature review I attempt to focus on issues associated with high-quality marriages. In order to manage and make sense of this large body of knowledge, the literature reviewed is categorized under five general issues: (1) demographic and personality, (2) communication, (3) relationship, (4) sexuality, and (5) gender. The contributions of these five categories to what we know about high-quality marriages are briefly summarized.

AN OVERVIEW OF HIGH-QUALITY MARITAL ISSUES

Demographic and Personality Issues

Several demographic and personality issues, such as racial and cultural homogamy, economic adequacy, religiosity, religious homogamy, age at marriage, the presence of children, early childhood experiences, and common values and interests, have been attested as significant correlates of marital happiness.

Some of the earliest studies in family science have helped us understand that certain personality characteristics are associated with marital happiness (Bernard, 1935; Terman and Buttenwieser, 1935a; Winch, 1939; Burgess and Wallin, 1953). Characteristics like emotional stability, self-control, responsibility, adaptability, and tolerance are characteristics highly

correlated with happy marriages (Terman and Buttenwieser, 1935a; Kelly and Conley, 1987; Locke, 1951; Kim, Martin, and Martin, 1989; Stinnette, 1983; Robinson and Blanton, 1993), while irresponsibility, lack of self-control (with moods, sex, and substance abuse), impatience, aggressiveness, and oversensitivity are associated with unhappily married couples (Hatton, 1959; Woodruff, Guze, and Clayton, 1972; Luckey, 1964; MacEwen and Barling, 1993).

Racial and cultural homogamy seem to augment both a couple's marital satisfaction and perception similarity between couples (Miller, 1971; Barbar, 1937; Roth and Peck, 1951). Studies have shown that the effects of nonhomogamy in these two areas can be moderated if the couple's age, socioeconomic statues, and education are similar (Biesanz and Smith, 1951; Deal, Wampler, and Halverson, 1992).

Empirical research in the 1960s supported the hypothesis that income is an important positive correlate of marital stability (Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Monahan, 1962; Levinger, 1965). However, recently it has been proposed that income by itself has little effect of marital satisfaction. The variables of "economic adequacy" and "perceived satisfaction with income" have been shown to be more closely linked to marital success than traditionally measured income, education, or occupational success (Brinkerhoff and White, 1978; Clark-Nicolas and Grey-Little, 1991).

Religiosity has been found to be a significant positive correlate of marital success and enduring marriages (Burchinal, 1957; Snider, 1971; Stinnette, 1983), and it is a key sustaining factor in helping couples work through the challenges and stresses of marriage (Fenell, 1993; Robinson and Blanton, 1993).

Religious homogamy has been associated with satisfaction, adjustment, and reconciliation (Barbar, 1937; Wilson and Filsinger, 1986; Wineberg, 1994).

Those who marry young have higher rates of marital dissolution and instability (Coombs and Zumeta, 1970; Bumpass and Sweet, 1974) which do not seem to diminish over time (Heaton, Albrecht, and Martin, 1985). The impact of children on a marriage is paradoxically interesting. On the one hand, their presence is associated with lower levels of spousal interaction (Luckey and Bain, 1970), dissatisfaction with finances (McLanahan and Adams, 1987), problems with the division of housework (White, Booth and Edwards, 1986), and high dissolution rates (Luckey and Bain, 1970; Kotter, 1985). Yet children are also associated with longer duration of marriage and a lower probability of divorce (Houseknecht, 1979; Thornton, 1977).

Exposure to adequate parental role models in early childhood has been linked to higher levels of marital functioning and quality (Woodhouse, 1930; Popenoe and Wicks, 1937; Lewis and Spanier, 1979). Having common values and interests is strongly related to marital success (Woodhouse, 1936; Schroeder, 1939), particularly if spousal consensus exists in moral/religious values (Fenell, 1993) and in family/home interests (Benson, 1952, 1955).

Communication Issues

Several communication issues distinguish high-quality marital relationships from dysfunctional ones: effective communication patterns, problem solving, conflict management styles, decision-making patterns, and adequacy of role performance. Happy couples use positive communication patterns (Markman, 1981; Bolland and Follingstad, 1987) and tend to encode

and decode each other's messages accurately (Roberts and Krokoff, 1990; Gottman, Markman, and Notarious, 1977). They also tend to express significantly more love and support for each other than do couples in dysfunctional relationships (Fiori and Swenson, 1977; Black, 1971).

We also know that positive conflict management and problem solving are skills associated with marital success (Stinette and Sauer, 1977; Noller, Feeney, Bonnell, and Callan, 1994). Couples who are content with their relationships are more likely to let their partners know about grievances, discuss issues together, and use positive conflict resolution strategies over time (Noller, Feeney, Bonnell, and Callan, 1994). Couples with less satisfaction are more likely to be more coercive when dealing with conflict, have demanding or withdrawing interactions, and are more likely to end up hurt and angry (Gottman and Krokoff, 1989; Rim, 1979; Gottman 1991; Kurdek, 1995).

Egalitarian decision making is also associated with greater marital satisfaction (Woodhouse, 1931). Happily married couples tend to have similar objectives, make mutual decisions (Lu, 1952), share financial decision making (Schaninger and Buss, 1986), and employ democratic decision-making techniques (Sporakowski and Marshall, 1985). A final communication issue is adequacy of role performance to expectation. In several studies researchers have found that as the gap between role expectation and role performance widens, marital happiness decreases (Laws, 1971; Chadwick, Albrecht, and Kunz, 1976). Marital happiness seems to depend more on meeting a spouse's role expectations than achieving an ideal standard (Ort, 1950; Burr, 1967, 1973; Tharp, 1963; Bowen, 1991).

Social Relationship Issues

Relationship issues that have been significantly correlated with marital quality are emotional attentiveness, positive regard, intimacy, commitment to spouse and marriage, companionship, and use of discretionary or leisure time. Several scholars have argued that attending to fundamental primary emotions, referred to in this study as *emotional attentiveness*, is a critical precursor to facilitating change and a fundamental aspect of most successful marriages (Fincham and O'Leary, 1983; Yogev and Brett, 1985). Intimacy shared in reciprocal (although not necessarily symmetrical) relationships helps couples progress through developmental stages (Erikson, 1963), solidifies friendships (Fisher and Stricker, 1982) and facilitates marital happiness (Schaefer and Olson, 1981).

Commitment to the spouse and to the institution of marriage seem to be the most salient reasons why both happy and unhappy couples stay together (Lauer and Lauer, 1986). A couple's commitment influences almost every other aspect of their marital relationship (Fenell, 1993; Blanton and Robinson, 1993). The lack of commitment, consequently, is highly correlated with marital dysfunction (Coombs et al., 1970). Several scholars have shown that companionship and how couples use their discretionary or leisure time is important to a strong marriage (Scheer and Snyder, 1984; Trull and Monsma, 1988). Conversely, time spent either in individual activities or with others if the spouse is absent has been significantly correlated with marital distress (Smith, Snyder, Trull, and Monsma, 1988). What, then, invites companionate activities and a healthy patterns of marital interaction? White (1983) argues that it is not a matter of being free from the time constraints of work and children, but the quality of the marriage itself.

Sexuality Issues

Several different sexuality issues are critical to high-quality marital relationships: sexual satisfaction (both with quality and with frequency), premarital conception, nonmarital cohabitation, sexual adjustment, and premarital sexual activity. It has been proposed that in high-quality marriages, wives' sexual satisfaction increases with the duration of marriage (Clark and Wallin, 1965), even though sexual frequency drops substantially after the second year of marriage (Greenblat, 1983; Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983). In some marriages this reduction signals a "problem" and thus creates marital dysfunction. In more satisfied marriages, couples tend to value the quality of sexual intercourse, but consider frequency to be less important (Doddridge, Schumm, and Bergen, 1987).

Research indicates that women who have premarital pregnancies and births are more likely to divorce (Bumpass and Sweet, 1972; Teachman, 1983). They are also more likely to have associated financial and educational disadvantages that are not overcome with time (Coombs, Freedman, Friedman, and Pratt, 1970; McCarthy and Menkin, 1979).

In the United States, cohabitation among young couples is an increasingly common aspect of the mate-selection process and a precursor to marriage (Macklin, 1972; Manning, 1993; Nock, 1995). In fact, a majority of marriages since 1985 began as cohabitation (Bumpass and Sweet, 1989). Despite the widespread acceptance of this practice as a testing ground for marriage, several scholars indicated that the marriages of those who cohabit are less stable and less satisfactory, and have significantly higher marital dissolution rates than those in which the couples did not cohabit (Bennett, Blanc, and Bloom, 1988; Teachman, Thomas, and Paasch, 1991; Demaris and

Leslie, 1984). An explanation of this paradox is that those who cohabit are more accepting of divorce and are less committed to marriage (Both and Johnson, 1988; Bennett, Blanc, and Bloom, 1988), have unconventional lifestyles (Schoen and Weinick, 1993), develop values that make divorce an acceptable solution to problems (Axinn and Thornton, 1992), and develop qualitatively different types of relationships--both within and beyond the immediate dyad (Nock, 1995). Those who report extensive premarital sexual activity also report extensive extramarital sexual activity after marriage, which correlates with less happy marriages (Athanasiou and Sarkin, 1974).

Gender Issues

Gender issues relevant to marital quality are mothers' and wives' employment, the division of housework, husband-wife helping relationships, and physical aggression and abuse. Some have suggested that women who work outside the home have less marital interaction (Kingston and Nock, 1987), more marital instability (Booth, Johnson, White, and Edwards, 1984), and greater family conflict (Galambos and Silbereisen, 1989) than women who do not work. Others argue that these findings exist only if there are children in the home (Houseknecht and Mack, 1989), if a wife's employment is forced by financial necessity (Orden and Bradburn, 1969), or if the husband disapproves of his wife's employment (Gianopulos and Mitchell, 1957). The impact of employment on the quality of marital relationships among dual-income couples seems to be mediated by several functions: the husband's sharing of chores that have traditionally been done by women (e.g., cooking, laundry, changing diapers, etc.) (Benin and Agostinelli, 1988) and the couple's subjective perceptions of "fairness" (Yogev and Brett, 1985).

A PATTERN IN MARITAL QUALITY RESEARCH

As we look at research on marital quality, a fairly consistent pattern emerges. Early studies on marital issues identified ground breaking and significant correlates, characteristics, and variables that are associated with the marriage phenomenon. Later studies found information that would occasionally contradict, raise questions about, or stimulate further research regarding the first wave of information. Some of the most recent studies, in addition to providing information on recent trends and changes, have attempted to explain these apparent contradictions and add to our understanding of this phenomenon.

A good example of this pattern is found in our thinking about the impact of financial income on marital quality. Empirical research in the 1950s and 1960s generally supported the hypothesis that socioeconomic issues such as family income, education, and occupational prestige were significant correlates of marital satisfaction (Goode, 1951; Williamson, 1952; Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Scanzoni, 1970). Later studies, using different methodologies, detected little or no relationship between objective levels of income or occupational prestige and marital quality (Galigan and Bahr, 1978; Glenn and Weaver, 1978; Mancini, 1989). Recent studies have suggested that "perceived satisfaction" and "economic adequacy," more so than traditionally measured income, are the variables most closely linked with marital quality (Clark-Nicolas and Grey-Little, 1991).

Early in this century, the presence of children was associated with lower spousal interaction, increased financial burdens, complications with the division of housework, and general declines in marital quality (Hicks and Platt, 1970; Spanier, Lewis, and Cole, 1975). In a later study of 19,000 subjects from the National Longitudinal Survey, Waite, Haggstrom, and Kanouse (1985) found that children can actually have positive and stabilizing effect on marriage. Rankin and Maneder (1985) researchers found that children increase the duration of marriage, and Hill (1988) discovered that children may even decrease the probability of divorce.

Another example of this pattern has to do with the evolution of our thinking about "religiosity." Studies have shown that the practice of, participation in, or affiliation with a religious faith increases marital success (Greene, 1955; Burchinal, 1957; Dyer and Luckey, 1961; Stinette and Sauer, 1977; MacKinnon and Franken, 1984). Later studies, however, indicate that religiosity neither improves marital relationships nor helps decrease the conflicts and problems commonly thought to cause marital disruption (Aldous, 1983; D'Antonio, 1983; Hargrove, 1983). Explanations of this apparent conflict have been diverse. Some have concluded that "religious institutions are not yet providing family support and nurturing to adequately meet the challenges of contemporary life" (Booth, Johnson, Branaman, and Sica, 1995, p. 670). Others explained that the impact and effects of religiosity operate through intervening variables. Therefore, a religious belief or a change in religiosity that does not impact one of these variables (emotional intimacy, time spent together, ability to cope, appreciation, commitment, communication effectiveness, etc.) might not have a measurable effect on marital satisfaction (Hatch, James, and Schumm, 1986). In other words,

religiosity by itself might not actually benefit or influence a marriage or family unless one's religious experience is strong enough to influence some of these key intervening variables.

Abbott, Berry, and Meredith (1990) found evidence to support the "intervening-variable effect" but argued that the positive impact was a result of other benefits provided by religious organizations, such as social support systems; enjoyable activities; supportive education in values, attitudes, and behaviors; welfare services; and encouragement to believe in and seek assistance from God. Still others propose that religiosity does have a profound impact on marital quality by helping couples work through the challenges and stress of marriage (Fenell, 1993; Robinson and Blanton, 1993).

This research pattern, although very general, provides several relevant insights. First, it establishes the importance of these early studies as benchmarks to which we can compare and contrast more recent findings. A knowledge of these preliminary results directs our orientation, enhances the efficiency of our research, and strengthens our ability to isolate and fine-tune our understanding of the most significant variables. Second, this pattern highlights the utility of looking at the same phenomenon from a different perspective, or using a new methodology. It would seem that our pursuit to better understand a phenomenon and our attempts to access valid information would only be enhanced by properly applying different methods and perspectives.

FOUR TYPES OF MARITAL RESEARCH

Within the marital quality literature, there seem to be four general types of research: Type 1, quantitative studies that produce fixed or static variables about marriage; Type 2, quantitative studies that initiate information about processes; Type 3, qualitative studies that engender information about fixed and static variables; and Type 4, qualitative studies that generate information about marital processes.

Type 1 research on marital quality is by far the most common and perhaps, depending on the data source, the most time-efficient method. Most of the marital information we have about demographic, sexuality, and gender issues comes to us from quantitative studies that help us understand how different correlates, characteristics, and variables--such as personality traits, interests, values, religious preference, financial income, premarital conception, length of courtship, age at marriage, number of children, and sexual intercourse frequency--relate to the marriage phenomenon. These types of studies help us understand fixed, predictable, and predominantly individualistic aspects of marriage which can be very insightful. An example is Blumstein and Schwartz's (1983) analysis of 12,000 married and cohabiting relationships. They identified nine predictors of marital dissolution, concluding that relationship difficulties were caused by (1) ineffective communication, (2) a lack of respect for differences, and (3) a resistance to change. Researchers in several other projects found that as the gap between role expectation and role performance increases, marital happiness decreases. Higher marital satisfaction is associated with a critical blend of two important issues: (1) conformity to role expectations, which has the strongest tie to marital satisfaction (Chadwick, Albrecht, and Kunz, 1976), and (2) adequacy

of role performance (Laws, 1971), the male role being critically important (Hicks and Platt, 1970). In other words, the more the behavior in marriage is consistent with a couple's ideals and goals, the greater the probability that their marriage is effective. This information is very helpful as we attempt to better understand what marriage is like.

Type 2 research consists of quantitative studies that acquire insights about significant marital processes. Much of the information we have about marital communication issues comes from this approach. If a quantitative study found that perceived commitment of one's spouse was a dominant factor in stable marriages, it would demonstrate Type 1 research. In contrast, Type 2 research helps us understand how these obligations are produced, how spouses formulate their images of one another's commitment, or the nature of the obligations in a marriage. Invariably, accessing information about significant processes helps us better understand "how" a particular phenomenon functions, while Type 1 research addresses the question "What is it like?" A classic example of Type 2 research is Gottman's work with, and description of, the processes by which couples resolve problems and manage conflict (Gottman, 1994; Gottman and Levenson, 1992; Gottman and Krokoff, 1989; Gottman, 1991). This type of information is exciting because it tends to be very practical yet powerful in its predictive reliability. Gottman (1991, p. 5) claims that an accurate analysis of the conflict management processes used by marital partners has an amazing strength of prediction:

> This means that if we wanted to predict marital separation four years later using our Time-One data, we would correctly classify about 90% of the couples as separated or not separated. These are extremely powerful results,

about as strong as those studies that link blood cholesterol with cardiovascular disease.

Type 3 research is found less frequently in literature on marriage because the qualitative approach (1) is labor and time intensive; (2) requires the analyst to master a rich array of data; and (3) limits the sample size (Boss, Doherty, LaRossa, Schumm, and Steinmetz, 1993). However, the information derived from this type of research yields a particular view of the phenomenon that is unique and often inaccessible to other approaches. Whereas Type 1 research considers specific variables related to marital quality, Type 3 research is able to capture the interrelationships and dynamics among these variables. Most of the information we have about social relationship issues in marriage (i.e., emotional attentiveness, intimacy, commitment, and companionship) comes from this type of approach. Many of the qualitative studies of enduring marriages have engendered this type of information. Lauer and Lauer (1986), Robinson and Blanton (1993), and Stinett et al. (1982) have identified key characteristics of enduring marriages (intimacy, commitment, communication, religious orientation, time together, and flexibility), as well as delineated possible interrelationships between these characteristics. Qualitative research also lends itself well to accessing information about private, subjective, and sometimes unpredictable aspects of marriage. Wallerstein's (1991) work with the long-term effects of divorce on children demonstrates this; and Kotler's (1985) analysis of sixty couples' interviews showed that low levels of marital quality were associated with a rigid division of duties and responsibilities, little regard for a spouse's changing needs, separate leisure pursuits, and an ensuing emotional detachment.

Type 4 research comes from qualitative studies that identify processes within a phenomenon. This methodology merges the strengths of the qualitative approach with the functionality of a focus on process. Consequently, the type of information derived from this approach effectively accesses private realms of a phenomenon and has the potential to be very practical. Much of this type of research is represented by case studies, such as Napier and Whitaker's (1978) Family Crucible, Hess and Handel's (1959) Family Worlds, and Paul and Paul's (1986) A Marital Puzzle, which, unlike a statistical approach, assumes that an intensive examination of a single case can accurately portray a phenomenological reality that can benefit both married couples and other therapists. These studies illuminate significant processes of both the therapist and client. Other examples that are more oriented to a specific phenomenon are Cowan and Cowan's (1992) landmark ten-year study When Partners Become Parents and John Snarey's (1993) How Fathers Care for the Next Generation. Unfortunately, however, there have not been many qualitative analyses of significant processes within the marital phenomenon, ie. type 4 research with focus on marital quality.

A NEW LOOK AT SOME OLD PROBLEMS

For this study, I propose a qualitative analysis of the high-quality marriages in this sample. In addition to the qualitative analysis, I suggest a new look at marital quality consisting of two different ways of looking at the marriage experience. The first is to shift the focus from an individual to relational view of marriage. The second is to modify the assumptions about

human beings and their approach to happiness. The shift in focus and modification of assumptions are regarded in this study as primary precursors to a practical approach to marital quality. The intent of this methodology is to heighten understanding of the marital experience and simultaneously produce practical and functional information about strengthening marital relationships. In essence, I want to "take a new look at some old but still very important problems in family relationships" (Nye, 1988, p. 315) by using a well-established methodology with a different perspective of marriage. I will now briefly explain this "new look."

A Shift of Focus

First, marriage can be studied differently by shifting the focus from the variables and correlates of marital quality, to marriage's interactive and dyadic properties. Much of the information derived from previous research about marital quality has enhanced our understanding of the phenomenon of marriage; but from a pragmatic point of view, it is difficult to know how to interpret and use it. The correlational nature of these findings prohibits strong, causal inferences regarding the impact of certain variables on marital quality and vice versa. One would suspect that the directions of influence are somewhat reciprocal, but assessing which variable is prerequisite for another can be confusing. For example, what is the relationship between high sexual satisfaction and marital success? Is sexual satisfaction a precursor to, a participant with, or a barometer of marital happiness? How can a couple who want to improve their marriage use this information? Should spouses attempt to increase their sexual satisfaction in order to have a happier marriage, or should they work on their marriage to

heighten sexual satisfaction? Simply put, characteristics and correlates do not answer these kind of questions. Schumm (1985) has suggested that researchers explore the interrelationships among the variables in order to determine which variables are prerequisites for others and to order the various concepts into an integrated whole. Glenn (1990), calling for more research that focuses on the interplay among variables, asserts that our ignorance of interrelationships may limit the scope and applicability of marital programs and interventions.

Rather than looking for more correlates, characteristics, and variable interplay, I shift focus to marital relationships; shared activities, experiences, and interactions; processes (patterns of behavior over time); and fundamental features. Instead of detailing the demographics of marital quality, I attempt to describe the dynamics of the marital experience. Such a change will shift the focus of analysis from the individual to the systemic, from characteristics to interactions, from variables to experiences, from correlates to activities, from concepts to processes, and from categories to principles. Rather than categorizing correlates of marital quality, this shift of focus will help us better understand the experiences and activities of being happily married. The shift will also facilitate a better understanding of what happy couples are "doing" to maintain vibrant relationships, rather than merely knowing about the constituents of successful marriages.

A Modification of Assumptions

A second way to look at marriage differently is to modify several assumptions about two important issues: humanity and happiness. These assumptions are critical to this study for two reasons: first, the happiness of

two human beings in a marital relationship is a component so critical to marital success that the assumptions about it should not be ignored; second, if our assumptions about human beings and their approach to happiness are defective, then the theories undergirded by these assumptions should be questioned.

Most of the information on marital quality comes from studies grounded in a natural science tradition. This tradition has been legitimized by impressive developments in science, technology, and medicine. When the scientific study of human and social phenomena began early in this century, there was some concern about the best ways to study the human realm: Should family scientists use the same methods natural and physical scientists use, or should they, in light of the differences between natural objects and human beings, pursue a different path? After several years of debate, the natural science tradition attracted the most confidence and has become the philosophical basis of virtually every economic, psychological, sociological, and familogical perspective cited in the literature review section.

This tradition views human beings as complex natural objects composed of mechanisms that respond to certain stimuli, which in turn produce behavior according to lawful patterns. Human beings are interdependent, living in a natural and social ecosystem. Consequently, humans are significant actors in, but only a small part of, a much larger production. Marital problems are generally considered to be products of linear, circular, and socialized causes that come from past or present genetic, environmental, systemic, or biological circumstances.

According to this scientific tradition, marital relationships can be enhanced by repairing painful experiences by learning coping skills,

relaxation techniques, improved communication, and better problem-solving skills. Marriage partners would have to learn how to restructure systemic boundaries; challenge, map, and rearrange power structures; deal with control issues; reframe problems; apply paradoxical injunctions; modify communication styles; detriangulate; or become more differentiated from and less fused with families of origin. Thus "change" is achieved by modifying the individual's internal thought processes or rearranging external environmental factors. An important and prevalent thread that binds this fabric of thought together is a consistent focus on the individual. This individualistic view of humanity, deeply embedded into our way of thinking, assumes that knowledge of the marital phenomena will help us control and predict this aspect of our lives.

I posit the notion that the human realm is very different from the natural realm. As such, it might be productive to recognize these differences and study human beings in light of them rather than in spite of them, as has been the tradition. Human beings, unlike physical objects, have histories and act through and in a matrix of social and linguistic meanings. Humans have a wide spectrum of physical, social, and emotional needs, as well as a vast array of abilities, talents, interests, characteristics, experiences, values, and goals. But fundamentally, human beings have several characteristics that distinguish them from all other life forms: (1) a moral sensitivity for which we are responsible; (2) social, relational, and familial connections with each other; and (3) ethical obligations to one another .

A school of thought in the social sciences describes humans as *relational beings*--a term that encapsulates the previous three assumptions about our humanness (Wilson, 1993; Warner, 1995; Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, and

Swidler, 1985; Inchausti, 1991). Social psychologists point out that we all have a basic need for intimate relationships: "There is a universal and primitive longing to be attached, to relate, to belong, to be needed, and to care" (Rice, 1983, p. 6). We know that isolation from other human beings is dehumanizing and that loneliness can be destructive.

If humans are, in fact, relational beings, then the quality of life (both identity and being) is intimately tied to the quality of our relationships with others. The quality of our relationships is defined by our responsiveness to the moral and ethical sensitivities we have for each other. If these relational assumptions of humanity were applied to a marital realm, it would seem reasonable to assume that a couple's moral and ethical responsiveness to each other, impacts the quality of their marriage. Another way to say this is that the quality of a marital relationship might be influenced by the couple's moral and ethical responsiveness to each other. Hence, I propose both the consideration and incorporation of these relational assumptions of humanity in my analysis of marital quality. Current marital quality literature has very little regard for humankind's need to connect with other human beings. Less attention has been directed to the significance of our relational obligations. Hardly any of the literature reviewed in this study addresses the issue of mankind's moral sensitivity. Wilson (1993) insists that our reluctance to speak of morality "amputates the legs on which any serious discussion of marriage . . . must stand" (preface). I argue that the inclusion of these relational assumptions in the analysis of marital quality might help access, understand, and perhaps describe certain aspects of marital quality that have previously been ignored or misunderstood.

Many of the assumptions about human beings from the natural science tradition have been applied to theories regarding mankind's quest for happiness. Consistent with this tradition, happiness has become synonymous with self-fulfillment. Consequently, many of our social science theories are laced with the assumption that when human beings have what they want, they are happy. This assumption of self-interest is so intricately woven into the fabric of our scientific reasoning and so securely embedded in our theories that it is rarely considered, let alone questioned. Recently, however, several scholars have voiced their concern about this approach to happiness. Popenoe (1993) describes our generation of Americans as a "me-generation," in which the individual comes first. He claims that as a nation, we are less willing than ever before to invest in the family and more dedicated than ever to investing in ourselves (p. 538).

Many scholars have discussed the difficult dilemma of achieving human happiness. Some have identified potential problems with being too self-oriented. Others have alluded to the need for a more productive approach to happiness. Loveless (1996) proposes an alternate pathway. A different approach to happiness, he explains, is to grant the possibility that individuals are not truly separate; that our relationship to others is an essential part of who we are; and that happiness comes as we live in a manner consistent with this principle. Happiness, then, might be a matter of placing sacrifice above self-service, establishing an other-centered rather than a self-centered approach to life, valuing family satisfaction above personal preference, and regarding other-primacy more highly than self-primacy.

Although this other-oriented approach to happiness is not as common in social science literature as the traditional individualistic assumptions, several

philosophers and social scientists have incorporated this concept in their works: Buber (1970) describes two ways of being in our relationships with others--one in which we view other people as objects and another in which we view them as real, living, feeling people; Inchausti (1991) describes the life experiences of those who "heard the call" and respond in "extraordinary ways" to heartfelt obligations for others; Warner (1995) details several emotional consequences associated with ignoring these heartfelt obligations; Lee (1976) provides anthropological evidence from primitive societies that happiness springs from an integral tie of self to community; Marks (1977) describes the differences in energy and time-effectiveness perceptions between persons committed to others and self-centered people; Erikson (1963) contrasts generativity (i.e., investing in, committing to, and caring deeply for others) with self-indulgence (which he associates with personal stagnation and social impoverishment); Snarey et al. (1987) detail the benefits and importance of parenting; Nock (1987) and Ahlander and Bahr (1995) describe perceptual differences of women who focus on equity, drudgery, and equality of housework versus those who are motivated by the love and linkages in motherhood; Hawkins et al. (1995) reaffirm the importance of developing generativity and the role that nurturing children plays in achieving psychosocial health in adulthood; and finally, Hawkins and Dollahite (1997) and Dollahite, Hawkins, and Brotherson (1997) define the conceptual ethic of generative fathering as "meeting the needs of the next generation" (p. 19).

The works just cited represent a wide variety of literature. However, very little marital-quality literature includes either the relational assumptions of humanity or the other-oriented approach to happiness. An examination of

the phenomenon of marital quality with these assumptions, which go beyond the assumptions posited by our current scientific tradition, might provide insights that would augment our understanding about the origin of marital problems or contribute to our understanding about how to improve the quality of marriage. The next section proposes the research question and a methodology.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question for this study is divided into two segments and attempts to answer the following query: What can the in-depth interviews with thirty-two couples who have been married for eight years inform us about (1) processes, paradigms, and characteristics of high-quality marriages, and (2) guiding principles of high-quality marital relationships.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative Research

In this study, I use a qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), qualitative research is any kind of research that produces findings that are derived from data that are gathered by nonmathematical analytic procedures. Ambert et al. (1995) explain that qualitative research has at its base (a) oral words in conversations, sentences, or monologues; (b) written words in journals, letters, autobiographies, scripts, texts, books, official reports, and historical documents; (c) the recorded field notes of observers or participants of meetings, ceremonies, rituals, and family life; (d) life histories and narrative stories in either the oral

or the written form; or (e) visual observations to access the respondent's unfiltered experiences and ideas.

According to Gilgun, Daly, and Handel (1992), qualitative research is particularly amenable to studies of marriages and families for several reasons: it is versatile enough to handle diverse life experiences; it can focus on the processes by which human beings create, sustain, and discuss their own realities; it is better suited to access the construction of meaning; it facilitates holistic studies; and it gives us windows to processes that are closed to other approaches. I will elaborate on several of these important distinctions.

First, this type of research discovers theories and explanations from the data themselves rather than making logical deduction from a priori theoretical assumptions, and it is particularly amenable to research that focuses on discovery rather than hypotheses verification (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Second, qualitative research effectively gains access to private spheres (Gilgun, Daly, and Handel, 1992). Marriages by nature are among the most closed and private of all social groups. A challenge for family scientists is to enter its relatively closed and highly protected boundaries. Qualitative research allows for the gradual building of trust and rapport, thereby increasing the researcher's accessibility to subjective meanings, affective (emotional) spheres, private experiences, and sensitive aspects of marital relationships. Thus it adds insight to the framework within which subjects interpret their thoughts, feelings, and actions (Marshall and Rossman, 1989; Wilson, 1977). Qualitative research also opens windows to subjective, meaningful, and emotional realms of the marital relationship--an

understanding that has been deemed much more important than demographic characteristics in regard to marital satisfaction (Maroglin and Weinstein, 1983; Fincham and O'Leary, 1983; Yogev and Brett, 1985).

Third, qualitative research can simultaneously accommodate the micro and macro aspects of marriage. Trying to understand the complexities of a marriage by looking only at one of its isolated aspects seems almost as fruitless as grasping the meaning of being human by only focusing on the regeneration of skin cells. To comprehend the whole, marital knowledge must be integrated and gained in many different yet systematically related ways by looking at it in its context, in a history and a culture. The methodology proposed for this study would override the tendency to extract marriages from their context, history, and culture--without which meaning is lost and our understanding of the marital experience is diminished. Wilson (1977) explains that "one cannot understand human behavior without understanding the framework within which subjects interpret their thoughts, feelings, and actions" (p. 249).

Fourth is its ability to capture complex inter-relationships and processes (Matacha, 1992). By its very nature, qualitative research, because it is broad enough to interact within a context and allows the unexpected to emerge, can provide data and insights and can raise questions that quantitative methods would unlikely generate.

Finally, qualitative research is congruent and compatible with the data collection process of in-depth interviews. As defined by Taylor and Bogdan (1984), in-depth qualitative interviewing refers to "repeated face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants' perspective on their lives, experiences, or

situations as expressed in their own words" (p. 77). This approach is particularly well-suited to research that focuses on discovering relationships among variables, the nature of interactive experiences, and answering the question "how." For example, Nock (1995) discovered that the perceived commitment of one's spouse, or the felt obligation that is likely to be associated with it, is the dominant factor in sustained marriages. How these obligations are produced, how spouses formulate their images of their partner's commitment, and the nature of the obligations in a marriage are issues yet to be discussed. The information from in-depth interviews would successfully begin to answer many questions that have thus far been unreachable. "Although this finding was not surprising given the religious affiliations of the majority of subjects," Fenell (1993) states that "it would be interesting to discover how this characteristic was helpful to the couples" (p. 455). An effective tool to access the information for these kinds of questions is the in-depth interview.

In-depth interviews facilitate gender sensitivity. Several family scientists have pointed out the impropriety of treating the marital dyad as a whole without considering that marriage may have different implications for each individual--that is, the wife and husband (Eichler, 1988; Thorne, 1982). Although much research on marital quality has been done on wives, that does not ensure that the measure of marital quality fully reflects woman's experience in marriage; the only way we will ever know is to ask them (Eichler, 1988; Long Laws, 1971). This study consists of interviews with just the wife, another with just the husband, and a final interview with both spouses. The comprehensive nature of qualitative research might serve as an

appropriate method of looking at couples' different needs and understanding how various strengths work together rather than in isolation.

Grounded Theory

A method for developing grounded theory was identified by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. This method encourages several activities: it promotes the immersion of oneself in the field to understand a phenomenon; it emphasizes the importance of grounding theories in the data; it suggests that the nature of experience continually evolves; it stresses that persons shape the worlds in which they live; it emphasizes change, process, and complexity in life; and it expands the interrelationships among conditions, meaning, and action (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

According to Nye (1988) there seems to be more interest in and emphasis on theory development (from about 16% of the projects in the years 1937-57 to about 22% of the projects in the years 1967-1987); however, a large majority of marital studies seem to be atheoretical (Hicks and Platt, 1970; Glen, 1990; Blumel, 1992). Lavee and Dollahite (1991) found similar amounts of atheoretical empiricism for the family sciences in general. In his fifty-year review of family research, Nye (1988) found that only about 1% of the studies examined clearly identified a particular theory. He then asked, "Is the failure to integrate theory and research due to lack of interest and concern on the part of the researchers, or is it due to the lack of useful theory that is available to them?" (p. 313).

This study uses a grounded theory approach to the data; that is, it allows the data to speak for themselves rather than imposing preconceived

theoretical suppositions upon the data. Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 23) convey the following description:

> A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of the data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge.

In other words, the theory is derived from and grounded in the phenomenon being studied. Rather than beginning with a theoretical lens though which we study the data, the lens is formed, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of the phenomenon. As the concepts and relationships within this approach are generated, they are provisionally tested in order to build a theory that is faithful to and illuminates the area being studied. If properly applied, this approach should engender new glimpses of the marital phenomenon and help us better understand its nature. If done well, the grounded theory approach uses systematic techniques and analytical procedures that enable the researcher to develop a substantive theory that is helpful and practical, and at the same time meets the criterion for doing "good" science: significance, theory-observation compatibility, generalizability, reproducibility, precision, rigor, and verification (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

PROCEDURES FOR DATA COLLECTION

In 1979, an initial survey of one-hundred-twelve never-married young adults was conducted. The average age of the respondents was twenty-one years; the ages ranged from eighteen to twenty-six years. Approximately 85% were students at Brigham Young University, a four-year institution, located in Provo, Utah; 99% were white; and 91% had been reared by both parents. One year later, in 1980, each of these individuals was given a second survey. Fifty-six of these individuals had married, and the average length of marriage at the time of this survey was ten months. Seven years later, in 1987, all fifty-six couples were sent a third survey, to which 95% responded. Thirty-two of the couples who responded were contacted and interviewed. Thirty-two of these in-depth interviews were transcribed. The data for this study are drawn from the interviews of these thirty-two couples who had been married for eight years. During the seven-year interim, one of the thirty-two couples had been divorced. A copy of the interview format is in Appendix A

All but one of the interviews were conducted in the respondents' own homes. Dr. Thomas Holman conducted the interviews. Each interview took two to three hours to complete, and consisted of three parts: a private interview with the husband, a private interview with the wife, and a joint interview with both spouses. These interviews were then transcribed. The typed transcripts range from twenty-three to forty-nine pages, and each contains the respondents' brief description of their family of origin, a more detailed account of their courtship, and a lengthy account of their marriage. Appendix B is an example of one of the transcribed interviews.

SITE AND SAMPLE

At the time of the initial contact and completion of the first survey, 85% of the respondents were enrolled at Brigham Young University, a four-year private institution sponsored by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Two percent of the respondents were attending other institutes of higher education, and 13% were not students. By the time the third interview was completed and eight years of marriage had passed, 90% of the husbands had completed a bachelor's degree, and 50% had done graduate work, 30% having completed a graduate degree. Approximately 58% of the wives had completed some college, 36% had completed a bachelor's degree, 4% had done some graduate work. The husbands' income in 1986 ranged from $25,000 to $34,999. The wives' income ranged from $7,000 to $8,999. Eighty-six percent of the husbands were employed full-time, 2% were employed part-time, and 4% were unemployed, and 8% were full-time students. Sixty-two percent of the wives were full-time homemakers; 20% worked part-time, and 18% worked full-time. This group would represent a middle to upper-middle class segment of Americans.

Incoming freshman in the fall of 1979 had an average ACT score of 22.3 and an average high school GPA of 3.24. In addition to meeting these academic standards, students attending this university must meet a moral code of behavior set by the board of trustees. This code, which is based on religious beliefs, states that men and women must abstain from premarital sexual intimacy; abide by a health code that prohibits their use of alcohol,

tobacco, drugs, coffee and tea; and honor a dress code that encourages modesty (Brigham Young University, 1993).

This group of respondents describe themselves as "active" members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly known as "Mormons" because of their belief in a supplemental scripture to the Bible called The Book of Mormon. Weekly attendance at worship service; payment of tithes; missionary service; adherence to a code of health that prohibits the use of tobacco, alcohol, tea, and coffee; service in a variety of church responsibilities; and private religious devotion such as daily prayer and scripture reading are all part of what it means to be an "active" member of their church.

The religious beliefs of the couples in this study play a significant part in their lives and are an integral part of their marital experience. The impact of their religion is manifest very clearly in several different and distinct beliefs: (1) a strong emphasis on moral chastity before marriage, and fidelity after; (2) a belief in temple (eternal) marriage that endures past the point of death; (3) an implicit conviction of missionary work, inclusive of a two-year self-financed mission when the young man reaches the age of nineteen--before he marries; (4) a serious focus on the importance of family and having children after marriage; and (5) a clear prioritizing and ordering of these life experiences. All the young men in this sample had served a two-year, full-time mission for their church. Each of the couples were married in a temple, which consists of the anticipation that such a marriage, if the couple is faithful to the marital covenants made therein, is valid and viable for all eternity--much past the point of "until death do you part." Later in this study, a

discussion will detail the cultural, educational, economic, familial, and religious context in which these couples' marital experiences were couched.

RESEARCHER'S ROLE

Determine a Research Problem and Question

The first step in this kind of research is to determine a research problem (generated from the technical literature and personal or professional experience) and a broad research question that allows for freedom to explore a phenomenon in depth. Eventually, however, it becomes progressively narrowed and more focused during the research process as concepts and their relationships are found to be either relevant or irrelevant to the research.

Be Familiar With Literature

Although one should be thoroughly familiar with the literature in one's chosen field, knowledge of the literature plays a different role for the qualitative and quantitative researcher. In grounded theory research, the goal is to identify relevant categories, assess their relationships, and put them together in new and different categories. Consequently, if one begins with a list of already identified formal hypothesis based on the literature review, these will very likely impede rather than assist the discovery process. It is important to understand that elements of previous studies can be used--but only as they prove themselves relevant to the primary data gathered from the interviews. Information from the literature review can be used to stimulate

questions or to direct theoretical sampling, or it can work as supplementary validation; but it is important to make sure that preconceived ideas from the literature review do not stifle creative thought processes and allow the data to speak for itself.

Maintain Theoretical Sensitivity

While the procedures are designed to give the analytic process precision and rigor, good researchers are theoretically sensitive (Glaser, 1978; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Theoretical sensitivity is a personal quality, an ability of the researcher to give meaning to the data, understand the subtleties of that which is communicated, and have the capacity to separate significant data from the trivial. Theoretical sensitivity comes from professional experience, personal experience, familiarity with the literature, and the analytic process itself (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). It is this sensitivity that creates pertinent questions from the data, produces comparisons that elicit new insights into phenomena, and helps create novel theoretical formulations. Theoretical sensitivity helps researchers recognize and give meaning to important data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), formulate theories of the phenomena that are reality based (Glaser, 1978), and keep a delicate balance between that which they create and that which is manifest in the data. (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Analyze Data

Following Strauss and Corbin's (1990) grounded theory methodology, data for this project were collected and analyzed using the constant

comparative method of analysis. I began the analysis by reading and rereading the interviews. The three steps of data analysis, or coding, as defined and outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1990), include open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The lines between each type of coding are artificial, because they do not necessarily take place in stages. In a single coding session, one might move from one form of coding to another--especially between open and axial coding in the earlier phases of the project. However, this study will explain each type of coding separately and sequentially for a clearer understanding of the process.

Open Coding

Open coding is an analytic process that examines, compares, conceptualizes, and categorizes data. As the transcribed interviews are read, each quote that is relevant to the research question receives a code number and a conceptual label. Each code number indicates whether the quote originated from the husband or wife, the number assigned to the couple being interviewed, and the page number of the transcript from which the quote was taken. For example, code number (W-21, 33) indicates that the wife made the comment, she and her husband were couple number twenty-one, and the quote is found on page thirty-three of the transcript. Similarly, the code (H-2, 12) points to a husband's comment, during the interview of couple number two, whose comment is found on page twelve. In addition to this reference code, each incident, idea, and event is conceptualized and labeled. Strauss and Corbin accentuate the importance of "conceptualizing" rather than "summarizing" these incidents, ideas, and events. For example, if a person

were standing in an elementary school hallway watching students during recess, the conceptualization of "monitoring" might be a better label than the summary statement of "standing in hallway watching students."

As the conceptual labeling progresses, one could engender hundreds of different conceptual labels. However, as the researcher compares incident with incident, similar phenomena can be given the same name. Eventually, certain themes and patterns will begin to emerge, around which the concepts will be grouped. The process of grouping concepts that pertain to the same phenomena is called "categorizing" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The phenomenon represented by a category is given a general conceptual name that may or may not change as categories are refined, constantly compared with each other, and systematically developed. A final yet very important part of the open coding process is to develop each of these categories by ascribing to them certain characteristics or attributes called "properties" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). These properties are then dimensionalized by placing them along an imaginary continuum, as shown in the example below (Strauss and Corbin, p. 72).

Category	Properties	Dimensional Range
monitoring	frequency	often . . . . . never
	extent	more . . . . . less
	intensity	high . . . . . low
	duration	long . . . . . short

The systematic development of categories, properties, and dimensions is important because it forms the basis for assessing relationships among major categories, regular categories, and subcategories. Therefore, understanding a

category's properties, dimensions, and relationships is an essential prerequisite to developing a grounded theory through analytic procedures. The basic analytic procedures by which this is accomplished are (1) continually asking questions about the data, and (2) constantly making comparisons for similarities and differences between each incident, event, and activity.

Axial Coding

The next aspect of data analysis, axial coding, has two purposes: first, to further develop each category beyond a simple description of properties and dimensions; and second, to make connections and assess relationships between a category and its subcategories. This procedure of category development is accomplished by using what Strauss and Corbin (1990) call the *paradigm model.* In this model, is is suggested that each category is developed in terms of (a) causal conditions that give rise to it; (b) the phenomenon itself; (c) the context, in which it is embedded; (d) intervening conditions; (e) action/interaction strategies, which handle, manage, and respond to it; and (f) consequences of any action or interaction that is taken. The actual process of axial coding through these procedures is quite complex because the analysis demands performing four distinct analytic steps almost simultaneously. These include (1) the hypothetical relation of subcategories to a category by means of statements that denote the nature of the relationships between them and the phenomenon; (2) the verification of those hypotheses against actual data; (3) the continued search for the categories and subcategories' properties and the data's dimensional locations; and (4) the

initial exploration of variation in phenomena, by comparing each category and its subcategories for different patterns, which are discovered by comparing dimensional locations.

Selective Coding

After data have been collected and analyzed, categories' salient properties and dimensions worked out, paradigmatic relationships established, and each category developed to a rich level, it is time to integrate the data through a process Strauss and Corbin (1990) call *selective coding*. This is the final leap from creating a list of concepts to producing a theory. This integration process is not much different from axial coding; it is just done at a much higher and more abstract level of analysis. This is accomplished through several steps: (1) explicating the story line; (2) relating subsidiary categories around the core category through the paradigm; (3) relating categories at the dimensional level; (4) validating those relationships against data; and (5) filling in categories that may need further refinement and development. These steps are not necessarily taken in linear sequence, nor are they distinct in actual practice; I distinguish among them only for explanatory purposes. In reality, one moves back and forth between them.

In summary, this process of grounded theory analysis is designed to do more than pull out a few themes or develop a descriptive theoretical framework of loosely interwoven concepts. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), this analytic procedure of coding is calculated to build theory, give the research process rigor, provide the grounding, build density among

interrelated concepts, and generate a rich, tightly woven, explanation of the marital experience.

Ensure Quality Research

This study's soundness will be judged by the criteria of four constructs proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), seven questions proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990), and the three general guidelines that I propose.

Lincoln and Guba's constructs for qualitative research evaluation are:

(1) credibility--an assurance that the "subject was accurately identified and described" (Marshall and Rossman, 1989);

(2) transferability --generalization to the population from which the sample was drawn;

(3) dependability--accounting for changing conditions through the flexibility of the research design; and

(4) confirmability--through grounded examples in the data available to other researchers who might wish to check the findings.

Further evaluation of the research follows Strauss and Corbin's (1990) suggestions. They argue that an evaluation of qualitative research should include a discussion of the following seven questions.

(1) How was the original sample selected?

(2) What major categories emerged?

(3) What were some of the indicators that pointed to these categories?

(4) On what basis did theoretical sampling proceed?

(5) What were some of the hypotheses of relationships between the categories?

(6) Were there occasions when discrepancies for the hypotheses were found in the data?

(7) How and why was the core category selected?

In addition to the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and by Strauss and Corbin (1990), I will attempt to identify information that meets the following guidelines:

(1) practical - the information must be profitable and useful to individuals interested in learning more about what they can do to help improve the quality of marriage.

(2) functional - contribute to the development and maintenance of marital behaviors that enhance high-quality marital relationships.

(3) helpful - the knowledge must be beneficial and profitable to couples who attempt to apply the ideas derived from this study to their marital relationships.

WRITE-UP OF RESEARCH

The write-up of the research will be conducted and completed according to the guidelines proscribed in the previous section by Taylor and Bogdan (1984), Lincoln and Guba (1985), Marshall and Rossman (1989), and Strauss and Corbin (1990). In addition, committee chairman Dr. Thomas Holman will direct the research process. Four other committee members will evaluate the study. Colleagues will also help evaluate the grammar, thought processes, and data analysis. Revisions will be made until the project meets the standards of the qualitative guidelines mentioned above and the committee's specifications.

CHAPTER 4

CREATING HIGH-QUALITY MARRIAGES

As described in the previous chapter, data collection and analysis were conducted using the grounded theory methodology outlined by Strauss and Corbin as a "qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop and inductively derive grounded theory about a phenomenon" (1990, p. 23). The heart of this methodology consists of open, axial, and selective coding of in-depth interviews with thirty-two couples. During the first few readings of open coding, several significant categories were identified. See figure #1 for a summary of the open-coded categories.

The relational linkages between categories were developed by using Strauss and Corbin's (1990) paradigm model. Using this model, axial coded data were organized into the phenomenon, interaction strategies, antecedent conditions, intervening conditions, context, and resultant conditions. See figure #2 for a summary of how the open-coded categories developed into the paradigm model.

The elements of this model were then further developed and placed into a "storyline" that created a picture of the interrelationship between certain marital activities and the quality of the couples' marriages. Figure #3 is a synopsis of the selective-coded conclusions. These three visual representations constitute a concise overview of the development and conclusions of this study. The balance of this chapter will describe in more detail the process, paradigm, characteristic, and three governing principles that appear critical to the creation of high-quality marriages.

Figure 1

CREATING HIGH-QUALITY MARRIAGES

Categories Emerging from Open Coding

Quality of Relationship Fluctuates

Requires Work

Efforts of Both Spouses Necessary

Not Determined by Context

Support Each Other

Communicate

Understanding

Commitment

Sensitivity

Kindness

Patience

Selflessness

Belief in Eternal Marriage

Love

Companionship

Unity

Affection

Figure 2

CREATING HIGH-QUALITY MARRIAGES

Paradigm Model of Axial Coding and How Categories From Open Coding Developed Into the Paradigm

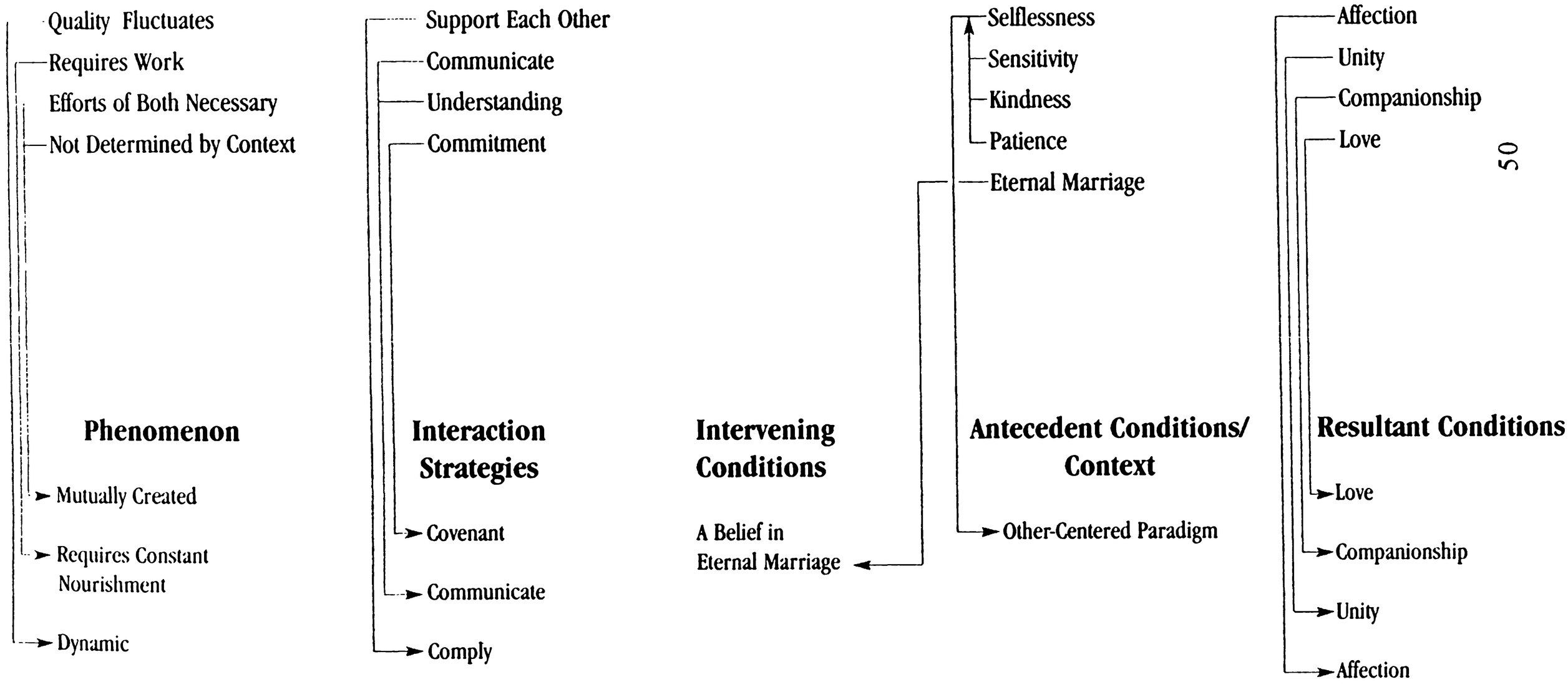


Figure 3

CREATING HIGH-QUALITY MARRIAGES

A 3-C PROCESS

Covenant

A. The covenant increases commitment
B. Qualifies couple for God's guidance & direction
C. Discourages divorce
D. Provides a mission and purpose in marriage
E. Helps in overcoming problems

Communicate

A. To be more effective in keeping conditions of covenant
B. To understand from spouse's frame of reference
C. To resolve problems without hurting relationship

Comply

A. To heartfelt obligations
B. Willingness to bear spouse's burdens
C. Right action available to all

Summary

A. Requires best efforts of <u>both</u> spouses
B. More systemic than linear
C. Gains strength when used as trilogy

AN OTHER-CENTERED PARADIGM

A. Other-centered paradigm = high-quality marriage
B. Learning to live outside yourself
C. Psychological dilemma of self-centeredness
D. Paradigmatic shift to Other-Centeredness
E. Other-Centered perspective of spouse
F. Other-Centered perspective of marital responsibility

A CHARACTERISTIC OF LOVE

A. Love is an attitude, activity, & emotion
B. Affection, companionship, unity are components of love
C. Healthy balance of all three components is necessary
D. Love is relational
E. Love is a desire to benefit life of another
F. Love cannot forced or manipulated

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Mutually Created

A. Best efforts of both are necessary
B. Created, not inherited

Require Constant Nurturing

A. Like growth of plant
B. Short shelf life
C. It's a lot of work

Dynamic

A. Changes short & long term
B. Some better, some worse

A PROCESS IN HIGH-QUALITY MARRIAGE

Each of the thirty-two couples interviewed in this study were similar in their age, education, cultural origins, income, length of marriage, number of children, and religious beliefs. However, the quality of their marriages was very different. After eight years of marriage, ten of the thirty-one couples were assessed as having exceptionally high-quality marriages, eighteen had average-quality marriages, three couples were struggling in their marital relationships, and one of the couples had divorced. The assessment of marital quality was based on three criteria: (1) the respondents' own description of their marital quality; (2) the interviewer's analysis of each couple's marriage--dictated by the interviewer following each interview, transcribed, and placed at the end of each transcript; and (3) my own assessment of the respondents' statements and interactions.

Mike and Martha have been married for eight years. Both have been raised in religious homes by good parents in close-knit families. Before their marriage, Mike served a two-year mission for his church--at his own expense. Mike and Martha were married in a Mormon temple, meaning that their faithfullness to the conditions of the marital covenant creates a relationship that is "eternal"-- without an "until-death do-you-part" clause. Mike has a master's degree and makes enough money in his business that his family is very comfortable. They have three children. Their marriage, according to their own description, couldn't be better. Their love and happiness have increased each and every year that they have been married. Marriage has been great for them. They insist they would not change a thing.

Robert and Rebekah's families of origin, religious training, marital preparation, education, age, income, number of children, and the number of years married are almost identical to Mike and Martha's--with one exception. Robert and Rebekah are divorced. What made the difference? Contextually, both marriages could be clones of each other, yet at this point in time, the quality of their marriages is very different. How can we account for such a vast qualitative difference in the two marriages? What are Mike and Martha *doing* to create such a high-quality, happy, vibrant marriage?

Among the ten couples in this study with the best marital relationships, there exists a process (i.e., a sequence of events) that appears to be tightly associated with the high-quality marriages in this sample. This process is evident, but not as consistently manifest in the eighteen marriages that are good, and almost non-existent in the transcripts of the three that are struggling and the one that is divorced. This process consists of three integrated behaviors--a sequence of behaviors that the couples with some of the best relationships are repeatedly *doing*. They (1) covenant, (2) communicate, and (3) comply.

Covenant

Commitment is an important variable in the marital quality literature. It is frequently cited (Fenell, 1993), it is tightly correlated with high-quality marriages (Lauer and Lauer, 1986; Blanton and Robinson, 1993), and its absence is highly correlated with marital dysfunction (Coombs et al., 1970). The term *commitment* is mentioned by virtually every couple in this sample. Even the three couples who were struggling and the one that is now

divorced mention commitment as an important ingredient of a happy marriage and at the same time lament their own (or their spouse's) "lack of commitment" as one of the things that contribute to marital struggles. However, these data do not help us understand why some couples seem to be so committed and others aren't. It doesn't answer the question "how" couples increase their commitment. Nock (1995) discovered the commitment of one's spouse, or the felt obligation that is likely to be associated with it, is a dominant factor in sustained marriages; but we do not know *how* these obligations are produced, *how* spouses formulate their images of their partner's commitment, and are still unsure about the *nature* of these obligations in a marriage. The question *why* some couples are more committed than others escaped both a discussion and an answer in my analysis, until just recently. Following several discussions with colleagues and my most recent reading of the transcripts, an idea finally surfaced. The thought was subtly embedded in a casual comment of a happily married husband.

> Another thing that is very significant is my covenant with God, and if I take that stewardship and do something wrong with it or something wrong to her, then I'm offending God first, and I'm offending her also. (H-3, 14)

The phrase "my covenant with God" captured my attention. The term *covenant* refers to the sacred promises made by this couple to God, as well as God's promises to them, if they are true to the conditions of the covenant. This covenant creates an intimate and eternal relationship between a man and a woman that does not exist in any other context. A careful reading of the nine other high-quality-marriage transcripts revealed that each of these couples

were very similar in their attitude about and carefullness in keeping this covenant. Their attitude is manifest as an enthusiasm to attend the temple regularly--in which these covenants are reviewed, and to participate in church services--in which these covenants are renewed. Their devotion to the conditions of the covenant is conveyed by their willingness to serve in church assignments--in which the covenant is magnified--and also by their willingness to live according to the conditions of this covenant--which seems to be a catalyst for greater commitment.

I then compared the responses of these ten couples with those of the other twenty-two for comments about temple attendance, church attendance, church service, and their faithfulness to covenant obligations. The eighteen couples with good (but not great) quality marriages were not quite as exuberant, nor was their dedication to keeping the covenant as pronounced. In attempting to explain this pattern I began to notice that among these eighteen couples, that one spouse would often have a very willing attitude while the other had a noticeable lack of exuberance about being covenant-centered. This lack of devotion in keeping the covenant is often attributed to one of the spouse's "apathy," "lack of interest," "unemployment," "an overly ambitious work schedule," or serious "medical problems." Even though four of the eight couples with high-quality marriages had similar challenges such as unemployment, abnormal work schedules, and medical problems, the fact that *both* partners were united and similar in their level of dedication to keeping their covenants seemed to override the impact of the challenges. Among the eighteen average-quality couples the disparity of devotion seemed to create a devotion deficiency for which the willing partner could never quite compensate. In the relationships of the three couples with

struggling marriages and the couple who had divorced, this attitude of being careful to keep their covenant seemed to be lacking on the part of both partners.

To illustrate the differences in covenant devotion I have been trying to describe, I will contrast the comments of a couple with a high-quality marital relationship with a comment from a couple with an average-quality marriage. The first comment is from a couple with an exceptional marriage. It was one of those transcripts that stood out from the very first reading and has become more impressive with each review. I found it very interesting that this couple--inspite of a busy schedule--would attend the temple regularly, even though it required traveling some distance and that they refer to their temple experience as a highlight of their anniversary celebration.

> My wife's sister lives in Washington and so we go to the temple once a month or every six weeks while she watches the kids. . . . Once year for our anniversary we left the kids with someone and went up and spent the night in the Marriott and went to the temple and spent about a day and a half together up there. I would like to see more of those type of experiences in our relationship, but it just seems like it is so hard to find time to be together. There is always so much going on. (H-7, 23)

Note the lack of mutuality in both their attitude about the covenant and religious maturity of this next couple who were assessed as having an average-quality marriage.

> I was trying hard to do everything that I thought was right . . . but I wasn't at the same religious point that he was. I

remember saying "If they call me to this position in the church, I'll say no!" It blew him away! He was shocked that I had that attitude. . . . He would say "We need to go the Elder's quorum party" or "We should attend the Sunday School party!" and I would say "Why do we always have to go to these church parties? Why don't we just go do something else?" . . . Then I began to resent all this church stuff and would say things that hurt him, like "If you don't do this, then I won't go to the temple with you this month." (W-48, 28)

Now compair the next two comments with each other. The first comes from a couple with a high-quality marriage; the second from a couple with an average-quality marriage.

(Wife) We both love and embrace our church callings. We just love them, we really do. We've really enjoyed them--all of them. And I think that has helped us. It has been good on our marriage. He will sit down and help me color in bed while I'm preparing a lesson for the Primary kids and I'll help him find something for a talk he's giving or his bishopric message. . . . We really enjoy doing that. He said he hasn't colored that much since kindergarten! (C-10, 17)

When we were first married and he was called as a ward clerk back in our singles ward, that was really hard for me. It got to the point where Sundays were a fight. Not that I didn't want to attend church or anything but he would be gone all day doing clerk business. We fought about it and he felt like I wasn't supporting him, which made me feel guilty. . . . Then I was in the primary, which I hated. . . . He was thrown into the scouts and I was thrown into Primary.

> I don't get along with other peoples' children. I'd never been in Primary myself and I didn't have the slightest idea what I was doing. I felt very inadequate and I was pregnant. The Primary president didn't like me and I didn't know anybody in the ward. (W-30, 38-39)

There are several points of interest in these two quotes. First, notice how consistently the word *we* and *both* are used in the first comment. The wife describes two people that are moving in the same direction, enjoy activities that are helping each other, and are unified in their devotion to their church service. In the second quote, it is more of a *me* and *him* approach to the issue, and there is not quite the same feeling unity, companionship, and enjoyment of the calling.

According to the transcripts in this study, there appears to be a healthy connection between the couples who are mutually devoted to keeping covenants, their commitment, and the quality of their marriage. Fundamentally, it appears that the very act of keeping a covenant is not only associated with high-quality marriage, but also seems to be a key factor in determining the magnitude of a couples' commitment to God, to spouse, and to their *eternal* marriage relationship.

In what way does keeping one's covenant impact marital quality? Within the transcripts of these ten couples with stellar marital relationships are several comments that delineate certain benefits of this covenant relationship and several insight about how it contributes to the quality of a marriage. The first is a belief that faithful observance of this covenant qualifies a couple for God's guidance and direction in their marital activities. This covenant consists of much more than just a set of beliefs. Because of its obligations and

promises, it creates an opportunity for God to become a very real, active, and integral part of a marital relationship--to the degree that if "I make this covenant with God, and do something wrong with it . . . I'm offending God first." (H-3, 14). Several couples equated covenant faithfulness as a prerequisite to receiving God's help in dealing with marital challenges so that the wrinkles in a marital relationship "can be made right."

> With the temple and eternal marriage, it is a three way commitment, and . . . even if things could be wrong in the beginning, because you had made that commitment with the Lord if you two are willing to work at it, it can be made right. (C-7, 16)

> I just think that once we started really trying to keep our covenants, . . . trying to live so we could get more inspiration on what we should be doing, then things started falling into place better. Before, we were just kind of helter skelter, let come what may. (W-40, 38)

> All through my life I've felt there's been something pushing me and helping me make the right decisions in life. I don't know why, but something has always prompted me to do the right thing. I've been in bad situations and I haven't been perfect by any means, but the major decisions in my life I've always felt like the Lord has been instrumental in helping me to do the right thing. (W-54, 22)

A second aspect of this covenant relationship that appears to influence marital quality is that it tends to discourage divorce as a viable option when marital turmoil begins to boil. To these couples, participation in this

covenant or "temple marriage" offers them the opportunity to live together as husband and wife, not only in this life, but forever. A covenant marriage sets up the conditions to have a marriage that is eternal, and at the same time discourages divorce as an option.

> I think a big part of it is our religious covenant. If we didn't have that, there would really be no incentive to stay together. (C-9, 8)

(H) If we had problems, . . . due to the fact that we had a temple marriage, divorce wasn't an option. When we had a problem we would both look at that problem and then sit down and find a solution. It was never in my mind to ever think of a divorce as a way out or ever seriously considered it as a solution. (C-31, 8)

> One rule that we made when we first got married was that there were three words that we would never say in our house, and those were, *divorce*, *liar*, and *shut up*. (H-50, 14)

> I'm one hundred percent committed--I intend to make this marriage work. Divorce is not an answer in my mind. (H-48, 14)

The covenant clearly establishes a marital mindset that tends to keep couples together, but does it enhance the quality of a marriage? The simple fact that these couples have enduring marriages does not mean they are happy. However, the utility of the covenant is not discouraging divorce, rather encouraging commitment. If both spouses in a marital relationship are "one hundred percent committed," their chances of striking some happy chords and having more harmony in their marriage are greatly improved.

Hence, keeping the covenant facilitates commitment and commitment contributes to the creation of marital quality.

> I think that by getting married in the temple and in knowing that is for eternity, you make a big commitment and I think that has paid off for us. Because of that, we are now more in love and closer together. (H-50, 16-17)

A third aspect of the covenant relationship is that it offers couples with a vision of the future, a mission yet to accomplish, and a purpose for their marital efforts. Viktor E. Frankl (1962, p. 76-77) proposed that a sense of mission and purpose in life enables humans to develop a sense of meaning that is critical to survival.

> Nietzsche's words "He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how" could be the guiding motto. . . . Woe unto him who saw no more sense in his life, no aim, no purpose, and therefore no point in carrying on. He was soon lost.

In the context of marriage, a mutual sense of mission, purpose, and meaning in marriage is also critical to success. The covenant tends to give couples a mission, purpose, and meaning for their marital efforts. But the mission, purpose, and meaning (in a covenant relationship) are found in activities and choices that tend to focus on the growth and development of others, rather than self. Additionally, there is also a tendency to emphasize future achievements over immediate accomplishments. Consequently, covenant-centered couples tend to consider the future in making choices, rather than emphasizing the moment. They also have the inclination to be guided by what is right for the spouse, marriage, and relationship, rather than focusing

on what is best for *me* right now. Within such a marriage the concepts of self-fulfillment and immediate gratification are subservient to "higher ideals" like selfless contribution and eternal progression.

> We do things for a purpose, . . . not for what's in it for me. . . . I guess it is a commitment to higher ideals, . . . a commitment to God, . . . contributing to humanity and making the world a better place for people to live, instead of selfish type things. (H-7, 26)

> Marriage has made a big difference in my life. I know I wouldn't have grown in the direction that I have and nearly as much had I remained single. . . . You just reach a point in your individuality where you can only grow so much, and if you don't pick up that companionship, . . . you just get stagnant . . .; you just don't grow, or at least you miss the opportunity to grow. (H-8, 13)

This sense of purpose, mission, and meaning provides a backdrop against which marital challenges can be compared. Therefore, marital challenges are kept in perspective by thinking past the problem to something bigger than themselves.

> Because of the temple marriage and the covenants you make, you have to think past your problems. Is this problem really worth fighting and worrying over what you could have? That, I think, has helped me a lot. (C-30, 12, 27-28, 30, 34)

One of the things that came up in our life was that she just grabs the toothpaste and squeezes it in the middle, and I

> have to roll it up from the bottom. For some reason that really irked me. But then I thought, Wait a minute, eternally it doesn't matter how she uses the toothpaste. (C-40, 5)

An observation is that a couple's covenant with God does not eliminate problems and challenges in the marriage, rather it enables them to weather marital storms more effectively. When marital problems being to brew and burdens become heavy, the absence of this covenant and the attendant feeling of commitment erodes the desire to keep trying. When this occurs too regularly, the required nourishment of the relationship declines and the quality of the marriage begins to dwindle.

> I think that Tammy didn't really feel like trying, and after a while I lost the desire to try too. (H-12, 4)

> I think that if I had come back and said to Rick, this is what has happened, this is what--how I'm feeling. I need this, then he would realized the importance of it. But I didn't; I gave up too easily. (W-12, 25)

Communicate

After a determination has been made to be devoted to the obligations of the covenant, the next and very natural part of this process is to communicate. Within the covenant made by these couples are different obligations. One of these is to be "willing to bear one another's burdens." It is difficult to effectively bear a spouse's burdens until you know what they are. So once a covenant is made, the next part of the process is to communicate--openly,

freely, and frequently--in an attempt to better understand the needs, desires, and burdens that a spouse may have.

> It seems like it is the amount of talking you do. It seems like your communication is directly related to how your relationship goes. So I would say you have to be able to understand each other and keep those lines of communication open. (W-33, 15)

(H) Actually most of our disagreements are based on not really understanding what the other person is saying or wanting to say. A lot of it just takes a little time to sit down and say. . . (W) just say exactly what I thought happened and he says what he thought happened. (C-37, 8)

> The very most important thing in any relationship is communication. You have to be able to talk and talk openly and freely about everything. (H-8, 1)

One couple made it very clear that similar religious beliefs--even having made similar covenants--do not always equate to similar feelings about spousal roles, rules, and expectations. There are gender, family of origin, and personality differences to deal with. Furthermore, burdens borne by a spouse in one week may change during the next. To help bear these burdens effectively, there must be an understanding of the situation through consistent communication and the best way to navigate a pleasant path through these dynamic differences is to talk, talk, talk, and then talk.

> Talk about everything you can under the sun, everything. Don't assume because of being a member of the Church that you feel the same way about things or that you value the same things. Don't make any assumptions. Talk and talk, and test each other. Throw out questions and cover every possible aspect of philosophy, management, finances, or how you feel about everything. Then don't always assume that the things you think are insignificant in the relationship will stay insignificant later on. Sometimes those things are the very things that irritate you the most. (C-7, 15)

Most of the couples in this study were adamant about the importance of communicating with one another. But the ten couples with the best marital relationships seemed to direct their communication efforts one level further--toward gaining an understanding from the other spouses' frame of reference. It is good to communicate ideas, feelings, and desires with each other. However, it appears to be even more productive for a couple to gain glimpses of different issues from their companion's frame of reference. Experiences in life like participating in athletic events, changing diapers, earning money, cleaning the house, and sexual intimacy, do not always have the same meaning to both husband and wife. The ability to see these issues from the spouse's perspective can be very beneficial when trying to be diligent at keeping covenants. The old Biblical adage "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" might not be as functional in a marital context as "Do unto others as they would have you do unto them."

There are those who insist that the key to conflict resolution in marriage is to not get angry. Others argue that it is a matter of controlling the tongue. Still others stress the importance of preventing patterns of emotional

withdrawal from each other. Every one of the thirty-two couples in this study had disagreements, misunderstandings, and exchanges of anger. Ironically, the couple who had (according to the interviewer's evaluation) one of the best marital relationships in the entire sample was the only one to mention disagreements that culminated with the husband sleeping on the couch. However, there are two clear-cut differences between the ten high-quality marriages and the four low-quality marriages. The first difference is that the partners in high-quality relationships were more consistent in their ability to see issues from their spouse's perspective.

> I think the main way that we resolve our conflicts is by discussing it with each other. And . . . I think we both . . . try to look at each other's point of view. (H-25, 10)

Another difference is that in the high-quality marriages misunderstandings and arguments are not drawn out over lengthy periods of time. Each of the ten couples, using their own techniques, are able to resolve marital misunderstandings without depriving the relationship of the care and nourishment it needs.

> We have disagreements, we do have them but they don't seem too fiery and stormy and drug out over days or weeks or months and those kinds of things. I am so lucky. (W-7, 32)

On the other hand, if couples do not communicate, they do not deal with disagreements very effectively. If they do not deal with disagreement well

and come to a resolution of their problems in a timely manner, marital atrophy sets in.

> But we've had the problem from the time we were dating until the time we got the divorce--we didn't talk. So if something bothered us, we just wouldn't speak to each other for several days. That happened from the time we dated till the time we got the divorce. (W-12, 22)

> I think it was basically lack of communication. I think that had we been better about talking about things, then we could have dealt with them. If you can' t talk about them, then you can't really deal with them very well. (W-12, 20)

Comply

In addition to covenanting and communicating, there is a final aspect of this process that seems critical to the quality of a marriage relationship. It is to respond to or comply with what each spouse has covenanted to do and has communicated about. Another way of saying this is to *comply* with one's own heartfelt obligations. For example, if a husband were to covenant to "be willing to bear his spouse's burdens" and then came to an understanding that one of her burdens was the night and day, 24-hour, around the clock, relentless, and constant demands of caring for their two little children and a newborn baby, it would seem to be a very natural thing for the husband to respond to circumstances that required his assistance. Complying to what one feels is the correct behavior is theoretically simple, but in reality can be a difficult choice.

An example of this concept described by Warner (1992). Suppose that a young husband is awakened at 3:00 a.m. by the cries of their newborn son. His initial feeling is to respond to the cry of his baby by getting out of bed, walking into the next room, and attending to the baby's needs. What does this husband do? He actually has several options: (1) he could ignore the baby's cries until his wife wakes up; (2) he could pretend that he is asleep and wish that the baby would do the same; or (3) he could reach over and gently wake up his wife and kindly remind her that the baby is *her* responsibility. Any of these responses could be "justified" by explaining that he works three jobs and only has a six-hour window for sleep. He might argue that he, unlike his wife, cannot go back to sleep once he gets out of bed. He could also insist that his decision to ignore his heartfelt obligation is "equitable" in that *his* job is to earn a living and *her* job is to take care of the house and children. He might even claim that his behavior is "fair" because she is nursing the baby and he, because of his consideration for her, does not want to interrupt her lactate schedule. Any one of these--and many more--lines of reasoning could be used. But one problem remains--he has felt to do something in his marriage that he is not doing.

By complying to what one feels is the right thing to do in a marital context, the decisions tend to lean more toward what is *right*, *ethical*, and *moral*, and away from what is *fair*, *equitable*, and *justified*. Bahr and Bahr (1997) eloquently describe the nature of such responses as "more reflexive than cognitive, more a matter of community identity, intuition, and reaction, than a realistic weighing of alternatives. It is a response to need, not an assessment of possible damage to one's personal projects" (p. 30). Consequently, these type of choices contribute most efficiently to marital

growth and maturation, and tend to be described as perfect choices at precisely the right moments.

> After eight years of marriage I look at him and I still think he's practically perfect, he really is. I listen to my friends and my neighbors complain about their husbands--they won't do this and they won't do that, they are such jerks and they don't help! And I'm thinking to myself, I can't think of anything bad to say about him! He helps me so much. He just always knows what to do and say. (W-38, 31)

> He doesn't like dance recitals and all that, but he's very good about going to all the children's activities, parent-teacher conferences, etc. At the preschool that we send our children to, they have a mother helper program, where a mother goes to help the teacher. Well, he's very good about taking his turn at going to be the mother helper! No other father does that. And the kids think it's wonderful that their dad came to be the mother helper of the day. They get a kick out of that. He's just really good about things like that. (W-10, 44)

The act of choosing to comply to what he feels is the right thing to do in a particular situation not only is facilitated by one's covenant and communication, it also facilitates more compliance the next time around. Responding to the moral and ethical call of what I refer to as *heartfelt marital obligations* (or HMOs) is, according to these transcripts, an unmistakable mark of the very best marriages. The home is a prevalent source of marital activities and provides a plethora of opportunities for both spouses to develop their responsiveness to these HMOs. When *both* spouses respond

morally and ethically to their heartfelt marital obligations, the impact on the marital relationship is almost magical! No single statement in this study is more closely tied to the ten high-quality marriages than "He helps around the house!"

> I think that I'm probably about the luckiest person on earth. I do, I feel just extremely lucky. I think we have a great marriage. He's a real help at home. I see other people that don't. I just feel that we've just about got everything. It really couldn't be much better. He enjoys the children and takes as much responsibility in raising them as I do. We come home, I fix dinner, and he helps do the dishes. He helps get the kids bathed as much as or more than I do. And we both enjoy it as much. (W-10, 46, 24)

> My husband helps me so much. Sometimes I think I could never be married to anybody else. I'm so glad I finally got enough sense to marry him. He is so good. (W-23, 26)

> Another thing about our marriage that helps make it work is that he is very willing to help me around the house or anywhere else. I grew up in a home where my father expected my mother to do all the housework, so I expected to have to do it myself. I remember the first six months of our marriage being totally surprised with the way he was helping out. (W-50, 7)

How does this simple choice to comply to our HMOs impact a couple's marital quality? According to Viktor Frankl (1962, p. 77), an attitude of

wanting to do what is right, and then actually *doing it*, is absolutely critical to our happiness--both in and out of a marital context: "What we really need is a fundamental change in our attitude toward life. Our answer must consist, not in talk and meditation, but in right action and in right conduct."

How does one know what is the "right action" and "right conduct"? Warner's (1992, p. 9:3) response to that question places the knowledge of right and wrong within the heart of every human being:

> At the core of every accurate account of our humanity lies this truth: As part of who we are, we know right from wrong. To be a person is to be with others in a family or community, and to be with others is to have a deep sense of our obligations to them. . . . Supposedly, right and wrong have no stability from place to place, no universal applicability; they depend upon where an individual happens to be been born and reared. What the moral relativists do not understand is that the law written in the heart lies deeper than any moral rules.

In other words, right action and good choices that benefit and foster marital happiness can be found within the walls of our heart. Some might refer to this as our conscience, others might call it an ethical obligation, or it might be described as a moral summons. Fundamentally, no matter what we call it, this knowledge is available to everyone. It is not something we need to learn, rather it is something we need to heed. As Warner explains, "We do not need to go in search of it, only to stop resisting it. No matter how much we are willing to spend, we cannot find it in any other way" (Warner, 1992, p. 6).

The elements of this 3-C process (covenant, communicate, and comply) work together in an interesting fashion in contributing to the creation of high-

quality marriages. Several observations about this process are particularly poignant. The first is that this process requires the best efforts of *both* spouses--implying that it is most effective if both spouses are faithful to their covenants, effective in their communication, and consistent in their compliance. If one spouse is valiant in these activities while the other is lethargic, it tends to deflect their trajectory toward a high-quality marriage. This is particularly apparent among the eighteen couples who have good, but not exceptional marriages. A distinguishing characteristic of this group is that one of the spouses has a circumstances, a challenge, or perhaps an attitude that prevents full, willing, and undistracted attention to their covenant, communication, and compliance. Examples of this dichotomy are found in statements like "I love to attend the temple, but she won't go" (H-48, 28), "I'm dying to have a conversation anytime about anything, but he almost never talks" (W-58, 17), or "My family lives . . . two hours away but I don't feel that I can visit very often because it is boring to my husband" (W-53, 48).

Try to picture the quality of a marital relationship in which *one* spouse is consistent in metaphorically ignoring the baby's cries, pretending to be asleep, or waking up his or her companion. Happiness is possible in this kind of relationship, but only as long as the one spouse is a *willing* host to the other spouse's self-satiation. This scenario describes well the eighteen average-quality marriages. They are by no means totally miserable. They have their moments of hope, happiness, and even grandeur, but they struggle--not necessarily because of dire circumstances but due to differences in their willingness to covenant, communicate, and comply.

Now picture the quality of a marriage relationship if *both* spouses consistently disregard their HMOs. Commitment would be directed toward

their own growth and development, their communication would attempt to explain or justify their individual points of view, and their response to HMOs would take second seat to what is justified, fair, or equitable. If this couple were to stay married, either the "baby" (and all it represents) would be ignored or the marriage would resemble a blood-soaked battlefield with two people continually engaged in a fight for self-fulfillment. Either way, it would not be a pleasant picture. This scenario might typify the three struggling relationships in this study and the one that is now divorced.

A second observation is that this 3-C process seems to be more systemic than linear. I would suggest that a positive change in any one of the three elements tends to invite a positive corresponding change in the other two. An increase in a couple's devotion to their covenant will help both their communication and their compliance. Similarly, I could argue that effective communication in a couple's relationship would enhance both the desire to keep the covenant and compliance to HMOs. There also seems to be a similar relationship between spouses. An increase in one spouse's dedication to any of these three aspects of the process invites a correlate improvement in the other spouse's behavior. A trademark of the ten terrific marital relationships seems to be a mutual and consistent effort in all three parts of the process.

A third and final observation about this process is that each part of the process gains strength by being coupled with the other two. Separated from each other, the parts of the process do not have as much of an impact on a marital relationship as they do together. There is a sense that the couples who covenant, communicate and comply are exponentially happier than the couples who are effective in just one or two of these areas.

The more consistently both partners repeat this process of covenanting, communicating, and complying, the more their reverence, awe, and respect for each other grow. When this happens, compliments flow more freely, appropriate responses are more frequent, spousal needs are more readily met, and negative interactions diminish. The outcome is a sense of satisfaction and extreme happiness with marriage, spouse, and life in general.

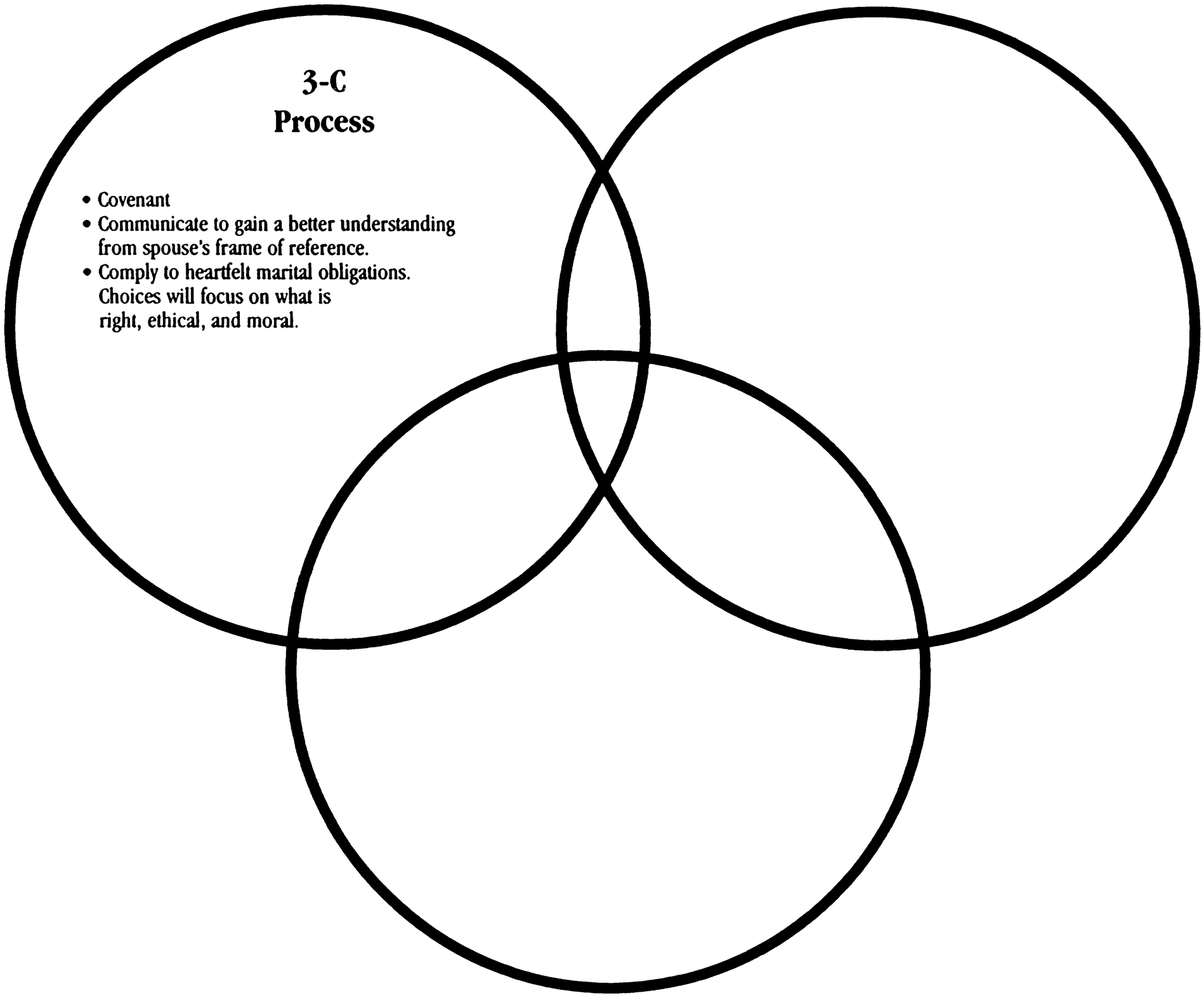
> I don't think anything--anything I could ever have done--would have been more fulfilling, regardless of whatever. I think I'm probably about the luckiest person on earth. I do--I feel extremely lucky. I think we have a great marriage. I see other people that don't. I just feel that we've just about got everything. I feel like it couldn't be much better. It really couldn't be much better. (W-10, 45-47)

> I haven't regretted for a minute being married. I was always so worried when I was a teenager, cause everybody painted such a dismal picture. . . . After talking with those [premarital] counselors, . . . they were all worried . . . and very much against our getting married. . . . It was a real concern--eternity's a long time. . . . It's not something to be taken very lightly. You know, we waited for the ghost to come out and scare us--the boogie man to come out that was supposed to be inside of us--and it just never did. Our marriage has been absolutely perfect. (H-3, 25-27)

See figure #4 for a visual representation of the 3-C process.

Figure 4

CREATING HIGH-QUALITY MARRIAGES



A PARADIGM OF HIGH-QUALITY MARRIAGE

Other-Centered vs. Self-Centered

My initial approach to the data in this study was to focus on behavioral patterns and marital activities that might help better understand the differences between the high- and low-quality marriages in this sample, i.e., focusing on what the couples are *doing* to create a high-quality marriage. After most of the data had been axial coded, I began to notice references to two general types of behavior: (1) activities and actions engendered by a concern for self; and (2) those initiated because of a concern for others. These two types of behavior are delineated in the following comments.

> The most difficult part of being married is that you have to be a little bit unselfish. There is one other person that you have to take care of and you can't do everything that you want all of the time. I think that is healthy. . . . People that do what they want all the time usually aren't very fun to be around. For example, if you are watching television and she wants to watch something else. . . . You have to make a decision. Are you going to be a jerk or are you going to let her watch what she wants. (H-50, 16)

> (Husband) It seems like we are more concerned about each other. It's like I worry more about her than I do about myself. (Wife) And I do too. I think we are interested in making sure that our relationship stays compatible and maybe even thinking that the other person is important too. (Husband) You have to be flexible, . . .

> learn how to adapt, . . . forget yourself, . . . and be willing to give up things. (C-37, 8-9)

I then began to see some parallels to selfless behavior. The couples who were most consistent in manifesting selfless types of behavior were the same couples who were describing each other as sensitive, kind, patient, supportive, etc. This indicated that the categories of sensitivity, kindness, and patience were subset properties of the larger category of selflessness. As I compared and contrasted the category of selflessness with all the transcripts, it became clear that the ten high-quality marriages had the most frequent references to and examples of this selfless type of behavior. In other words, it appeared that the most unselfish couples had the highest-quality marriages. However, one question begged an answer: What is it that engenders selfless attitudes and behavior? How can we explain why some couples seem to be so selfless while others are so selfish? The following quote offered a clue.

> Well, overall I'd have to say that I'd evaluate marriage as bonding and growth-producing. The challenges that have come with it, which we have met and dealt with, have produced growth. . . . I think that it has helped me to, by experience, learn more about love and selflessness. Self-centeredness was kind of an issue in our early years of marriage that detracted. (H-8, 16)

The term *self-centeredness* implies a way of thinking or *paradigm*--a term coined by David Reiss (1981). The idea is that one's paradigmatic orientation influences behavior. Hence, *selfish* behavior springs from a self-centered paradigm and *selfless* behavior from an other-centered paradigm.

As I began looking for references to, and evidence of, these two paradigms, it became clear that this other-centered paradigmatic orientation was a key "antecedent condition" that led to the occurrence of selfless behavior as well as the development of high-quality marital relationships. Consequently, the term *other-centered paradigm* became the new label for the old category of *selflessness*. The ten couples with high-quality marital relationships tend to function most consistently from an other-centered way of thinking. This way of thinking seems to facilitate marital activities, choices, and acts that are offered freely--without compulsion, force, or resentment--and manifest "in every aspect" of marriage.

> I think I've, in a positive way, been able to learn selflessness, and over the last few years really been able to do it with a good heart, without resentment. (H-8, 16)

> (Husband) It goes beyond a temple marriage. I have seen couples that are not married in the temple that have better marriages than those that are married in the temple. (Wife) We are concerned a lot about the other person and that comes through in every aspect. (C-37, 8)

Several implications in these last two comments deserve discussion. The first is the idea the covenant "goes beyond" a temple marriage. Keeping the covenants invites participants to turn their focus away from self and toward others. For those who take these covenants seriously, the very act of keeping one's covenant encourages a way of thinking (and consequently, a way of behaving) that is other-centered. However, if a couple choose not to adhere to the conditions of this covenant, it is possible that they would have no marital

advantage over those who "are not married in the temple." In essence, a couple's devotion to their covenant seems to be at least as critical to the creation of marital quality as being married in the temple.

Another implication is that a selfless concern for the growth and development of one's spouse is something so fundamental to relationship quality that it is manifest in many different marital aspects. However, it must be done "with a good heart--without resentment." Other-centered behavior, although conducive to a high-quality marriage, is something that might be difficult to fake. I will discuss in detail, later in this chapter, what the spouse and marital relationship look like from an other-centered perspective.

A final implication has to do with how a couple gain this other-centered way of thinking. An other-centered paradigm seems to be so synonymous with the unity, companionship, and affection of high-quality marriages, why would a couple want to even try another orientation? Why aren't every married couple doing their best to maintain this approach in their marriage? A careful reading of the previous quotes suggests the idea that this paradigm is *learned*, rather than something that comes automatically with the marriage license. This idea of learning or developing such an approach to life and marriage is beautifully described in the following dialogue in *The Paracelsus*, a poem by Robert Browning (1909, p. 222-223):

"There was a time when I was happy," said Browning's Paracelsus. "And when was that?" asked his friend Festus. "The time I vowed myself to man," replied the Paracelsus. "Great God, they judgments are inscrutable," said the Festus. The Paracelsus continued, "There is a natural longing of the heart for fullness and I found it. It is to live in all things outside yourself in love. This is the life of

> God. In Him it is accomplished and perfect; but in all created things it is a lesson learned slowly and with much difficulty."

I submit the idea that "learning to live in all things outside yourself in love" defines an other-centered orientation in marriage. The paradigmatic orientation illustrated in the following comment is consistently associated with high-quality marital relationships in this sample.

> I never felt like I needed time for myself. . . . It's never mattered to me. I always just wanted to be doing things with the kids or doing things with him (husband). (W-38, 31)

On the other side of the fence, a self-centered orientation seems to be the prevalent paradigm in the transcripts of the couples with marriages that are struggling.

> I know sometimes I need to be more concerned about his feelings. . . . If there is ever an argument it's because I've been selfish; . . . if I weren't selfish in some things it would be better. (W-41, 31)

> When she was in college she had a lot of science courses and wanted to study nursing. She went to work right after we were married so I could finish college. . . . She has always been very achievement oriented and is a very good student. Very capable and bright, and she wanted very much to continue with her studies and get a nursing degree, . . . but I wasn't very supportive. I was oblivious to what she was experiencing. I think that I could have

> been more in tune with what she was experiencing and how she was feeling. . . . I think on my part that was a problem. (H-12, 5-8)

The trademark of the eighteen average-quality marriages is a pattern of one spouse operating predominantly from a self-centered paradigm while the other is more consistent in coming from an other-centered paradigm. This paradigmatic paradox is manifest in one spouse's disregard for the other spouse's feelings or perhaps an inability of one spouse to sense the effect of a certain attitude or behavior on the other spouse. It is as though one partner is so caught up in his or her own world that he or she is unaware of how words and attitudes affect the spouse. This scenario is illustrated in the following comments.

> I have to be very careful of how I say things and what I say without offending her. . . . Sometimes it takes days to plan out how I'm going to say something. . . . Its like walking on eggs trying to decide the best way to talk about something without making her upset, . . . so the things we talk about are not real crucial things. (H-23, 8-9)

> If I could stay at work once a week until six o'clock I know I would get a lot accomplished. But because of her reaction, I don't dare stay past five. (H-23, 14)

> I exercise and diet and feel good about my appearance, but he's always on me about my weight, . . . like he'll ask "When are you going to do something about this?" or "I guess I'm just going to have to learn to live with you like this!" or "if it wasn't for your weight, we'd never have

anything to fight about.". . . Like I'll go sit on his lap and he'll pinch a roll of fat and say "Are you ever going to take care of this?" (W-53, 45)

My family lives in San Diego, about two hours away but I don't feel that I can visit very often because it is boring to my husband. He just sits there and he always complains that they don't have anything to do. Where I'd be content and satisfied just to sit and talk, . . . it's real boring to him. So we don't go very often. (W-53, 48)

I also noticed among these eighteen average-quality marriages a hint of incongruence (when the participants are interviewed individually) in their response to questions about the status or quality of their marriage. One spouse paints a picture of total marital bliss, while the other (in a separate and private interview) expresses serious concerns about several aspects of their marital relationship. These are just a few indications of a little less unity, less effective communication, and a sense not being quite as in tune with each other's burdens as the high-quality marriages are.

A self-centered orientation is not only associated with marital struggles in this sample, but has been linked with lower-quality marriages in other literature as well. Loveless (1996) explains several reasons why a self-centered way of living is incongruent with high quality marriage relationships. The first is that if love or happiness is based on self-satisfaction, the supply will always be inadequate because our needs and wants are usually infinite. Second, emphasizing the needs of one spouse will automatically deemphasize the needs of the other, leaving one spouse at the mercy of the other's needs. This approach, he explains, is "inherently parasitic, requiring

for its very existence either a nonhedonistic host or at least an unhappy person who is coerced in some way to do the happy person's will" (Loveless, 1996, p. 4). Finally, if marriages are deemed "good" only as long as an individual's needs are met, what happens if something outside the couple's control negates self-satisfaction or if one spouse cannot keep pace with the other spouse's demands? The answer is clearly evident in our nation's divorce and abuse statistics.

Yankelovich (1981) adds a description of the psychological dilemma created by this self-centered search for fulfillment:

> Many truly committed self-fulfillment seekers focus so sharply on their own needs that instead of achieving the more intimate relationships they desire, they grow farther apart from other. In dwelling on their own needs, they discover that the inner journey brings loneliness and depression. They are caught in a debilitating contradiction. Their goal is to expand their lives by reaching beyond the self, but the strategy they employ constricts them, drawing them inward toward an ever-narrowing, closed-off "I." (p. 42)

In light of the association between other-centered paradigm and high-quality marital relationship, I posit the notion that the greater a couple's ability to maintain an other-centered orientation in marriage, the greater will be the quality of their relationship. One school of thought in the social sciences describes humans as relational beings. If humans are, in fact, relational beings, it would seem that the quality of our marital relationships might be tied to our moral and ethical responsiveness to each other. If both spouses were predominantly other-centered and had a mutual concern for

the other, this would invite the love and ensuing high-quality marital relationships that are so essential to our well-being. Therefore a critical choice in the creation of marital quality is whether to act from an other-centered or a self-centered orientation.

Another way to articulate this idea is that the quality of a marital relationship might be defined by the number and consistency of a couple's other-centered marital choices. This idea is much easier to talk about than to practice, but it holds the possibility of having much to do with the quality of our marital relationships.

Paradigmatic Shifts to Other-Centeredness

The data in this sample are not sufficient to determine whether the choice to be other-centered is made moment by moment, day by day, or just once in a couple's married life. Nonetheless, comments such as the following intimate that occasional shifts to an other-centered way of thinking are necessary.

> I think back on it now and I was kind of a heel. I was more interested in my own self gratification than I was in her and that was probably the main part of the problem. . . . I think we reached a balance after about the first year of our marriage and realized what the needs of the other person were and adopted those to our own desires. After that we had relatively few problems. (H-50, 15)

This shift from a self-centered to an other-centered paradigm will be labeled in this study and a *paradigmatic shift* or *PDS*. It is something very real, but

not obtrusive. A paradigmatic shift is not easily detected in one or two concise statements. None of the respondents said, "Things were not going well in our marriage, so we changed our paradigmatic orientation, and since then everything has been fabulous!" The identification of this shift requires the analysis of an entire dialogue or a complete story. Because of the significant nature of this paradigmatic shift and its impact on marital relationships, a brief discussion is in order.

The concept of *qualitative shifts in our perceptions of life* does not innundate marital quality literature. The few scholars who have published something about this phenomenon explain that this type of a shift facilitates a reorganization of the individual's inner psychological world as well as external behavior. Consequently, such a shift encompasses two significant activities: (1) "a qualitative shift in perceptions of oneself and the world" (Cowan, 1991, p. 15); and (2) a "concomitant behavioral shift that can be observed by others" (Hawkins, Christiansen, and Sargent, 1993, p. 533). These cognitive and behavioral shifts change the way couples see themselves, their spouses, and their marriage, as well as the way they behave. It is as though one sees the world through "new eyes."

Although this was the most difficult aspect of marriage to detect in the transcripts, I consider it to be a powerful precursor of a high-quality marriage. After spending much time reading the transcripts, asking questions of the data, and trying to understand the dynamics of the two paradigmatic orientations, I was reading one of the interviews with the following description of a marriage from the wife's point of view.

> I packed my bags and my plan was to go to work and not come back. . . . I was working six days a week, it was

summertime and I was seven months pregnant. I felt terrible. I felt miserable. He didn't have a job. I knew I'd come home to this house with no drapes, no lawn, no furniture, and a husband who was sitting there. I'd be exhausted after having gotten up at 5:30. There would be no food to eat . . . It was horrible. . . . I had dreamed that we would have our home and that I would be out buying cute baby things and we'd have this cute baby room, and none of that was happening and I was very, very upset with that whole situation. . . . I hated him because it was his fault that I had to work. He was supposed to be taking care of me. He was supposed to be taking care of our family. It wasn't fair. I had always been good. Why had the Lord punished me like this? (W-8, 25, 31)

Shortly after reading the account of her frustrations, I read another quote from the same wife regarding her feelings about her marriage:

I think marriage is wonderful. I do. I just love it. Most of my friends are women who always dreamed that they would get married and that life would be heavenly. Many of them are dissatisfied with how their husbands take care of and help with the kids. . . . I have a husband who is just wonderful. They're all saying, "If my husband died tomorrow I'd be grateful and I would never marry again." For me, marriage has been wonderful. I just have loved it. It's been so good for me. (W-8, 32)

What happened? Did she marry a different man? A more detailed examination of the interview led to an interesting insight. It *was not* change of spouse, a change in circumstance, or a change in financial situation. It *was*

a change in the way she saw herself, her spouse, and her marriage. Here is how she described it:

> I'd met some wonderful people and discovered that Brian and I had really worked out a real supportive relationship. I could come home, I could talk to him about what was happening, and he was very supportive of me working, learning, and growing. He was very willing to help with the kids, clean the house, fix meals. I noticed my friends that had just gotten married and their husbands had gone off to work. When their husbands came home they really had a hard time--this baby's crying. What should I do? Brian didn't have to ask any of those questions because he knew what to do. He took care of them as much as I did. So I just decided that it had been really beneficial for me to work. I had developed a lot personally. . . . It was beneficial for us as a family because my children really got to know him. . . . They learned that he could take care of them as well as I could. . . . It wasn't his fault that he didn't make a lot of money. . . . He had a lot of other plusses going for him. . . . I decided I needed to give that cross up, so I did. (W-8, 26)

How did it happen? All she said to answer that question is "I met some wonderful people," who apparently helped her "discover" something about her relationship that she had not recognized before. After thinking about her situation (with this new perspective), she "decided" that there were several benefits of working that she apparently had not thought about before, and then she determined "to give up that cross, so I did." It is possible that her husband made a sudden and dramatic change that initiated this woman's attitude about him, but based on the context of this interview and an analysis of her husband's interview, the stark difference in her comments was the

result of a change in *her* paradigmatic orientation which had an impact on her feelings and on her behavior. Before the paradigmatic shift, this young mother's concern seemed to focus on what was good, profitable, and fair for *me*. After the shift her focus seemed to be her marital relationship and family. Before the change she attributed her misery, barren home, and horrible situation to her husband, using his lack of income as the justification for her feelings. After the shift she acknowledged the situation but looked at the benefits, rather than the drawbacks. Before the shift she saw her husband in terms of how useful he was *to* her and what he was doing *to* her. After the change, she seemed more aware of what his contributions *for* her and *for* the family. Before the shift there was a sense of being separate, isolated, burdened, and alone. After "giving up the cross" there is a sense of being connected and content.

I propose that these paradigmatic shifts are essential in overcoming the experience of separateness which, according to Erich Fromm (1956), is the source of all anxiety, and overcoming it is one of man's deepest needs. Such a paradigmatic shift also seems to be a critical precursor to creating the kind of marriage described by the same spouse who at one point had packed her bags and did not intend to return to her home.

> I think it's wonderful. . . . I just love it. . . . I have a husband who is just wonderful. . . . For me, marriage has been wonderful. I just have loved it. It's been so good for me. (W-8, 32)

The paradigmatic shift illustrated in this example is much different from a positive mental attitude. It is an outward shift of focus away from *self* and

toward *others*--in which the emphasis and priority is centered on what benefits one's spouse, marriage, and family--not necessarily what is positive. This change not only impacts the cognitions and behavior of the individual making the shift, but also seems to systemically invite a corresponding change in those around him/her. Consider the following example.

Couple number forty had been married for three years. The husband was going to school and trying to finish his master's degree, working full time, serving in a very demanding position in his church, and attempting to building a new home. The wife was also going to school--trying to complete her bachelor's degree and raise two small children and had just given birth to a new baby boy, born with a cleft lip and pallet, which required one surgery after another, followed by several months of isolation from public situations. The wife describes this period of her marriage.

> It was like living a nightmare in real life. It was terrible. We were both going just like this all the time and trying to deal with all these problems at the same time. It was just horrible. . . . I was so stressed out, I wasn't eating right or sleeping well. . . . Every time we tried to talk I'd just blow up and he would just sit and say nothing. There was just no communication. . . . He'd just close up and wouldn't say anything. . . . We were both so head strong, we clashed on a lot of things; even in games, we're just both really competitive. . . . I never really realized it until then. . . . I had depression and developed an ulcer. (W-40, 8-11)

Fortunately, something happened to change this couple's relationship for the better. She continues:

> I'm not sure exactly what changed all that, but yeah, all of a sudden he started communicating with me. Really, it (our marriage) used to be just terrible, but now . . . it's great. (W-8, 37)

Although the wife really wasn't sure why or exactly what happened, the change in her relationship had a drastic impact on her emotional and physical well-being. An analysis of their situation reveals that it had no association to a change of employment, church calling, or finishing the new home. During this time period, the husband did not complete his master's program. In fact, she said he failed his comprehensive exams the first time he took them. However, the change *can* be linked to a paradigmatic shift which the husband describes in the following account.

> I used to win every argument. I made sure I did. I was the man, she was wrong, . . . and I made sure she knew it. . . . I can see now that I was trying to keep my nose clean and make her's dirty by trying to make everything her fault. . . . I guess it was what the doctor told me, "Hey you've got some serious problems here, and if you don't help her out she's going to have worse problems than just an ulcer." I started to look at the situation differently. . . . I was the major cause of her depression because I was gone all the time with school, and all those pressures, and I didn't realize it. . . . I started saying to myself what do I need to change? Now we can sit down and talk about our problems and resolve them. (H-40, 8-10)

The couples with challenging marital relationships suffer from what might be called "paradigmatic paralysis" and never, or rarely, make that much needed shift away from self. My prognosis is that couples who live life

with a self-centered paradigm may encounter moments of happiness, but they will most often find themselves living a life that is contrary to human nature--separate, isolated, and alone. Therapeutically, pursuing a paradigmatic shift away from self has the possibility of being more profitable for discontented couples than creating changes in their communication techniques. A paradigmatic shift might have more of an impact on the quality of marriage than an upward shift in income.

The data are not sufficient to indicate exactly what initiates a PDS, but an overview of the previous two examples hints at the possibility that PDSs may have an association with marital crisis. In both situations the couples (or at least one of the partners) encountered a severe crisis in their marriage, i.e., the young mother's extreme dissatisfaction with her marital situation that led to the decision to pack her bags and the husband's encounter with the doctor advising him that his wife's condition was very serious and could get worse if something drastic didn't happen rather quickly. The idea of associating a PDS with marital crisis is very congruent with Reiss' (1981) assertion that there is very little change in paradigms when life in uncomplicated and smooth-running. However, Reiss explains, when stressful situations arise, families tend to begin questioning old ways of thinking and standard ways of operating. They consequently develop new strategies and paradigms for coping with the stress.

My explanation about what facilitates a paradigmatic shift combines both the concept *learning* and the concept of *crisis*. I suggest that a paradigmatic shift to other-centeredness is something that is learned or developed by working through crisis and challenges that invariably surface in a marriage. I would also argue that the process of working through these problems is

facilitated as couples become more devoted to their *covenant* obligations (facilitating a change of focus from self to others), more effective in their ability to *communicate* (understand each others burdens), and more consistent in *complying* with their HMOs. One husband described the process as one of *learning* selflessness by dealing with the challenges (*crisis*) of marriage.

> I'd evaluate marriage as bonding and growth-producing. The challenges that have come with it, which we have met and dealt with, have produced growth. . . . I think that it has helped me to, by experience, learn more about love and selflessness. (H-8, 16)

Let's take a look at what a spouse and marital responsibility looks like with the "new eyes" of an other-centered paradigm.

An Other-Centered Perspective of Spouse

In a self-centered paradigm, the primary thrust seems to be a concern for the life and growth of self and how well one's spouse satisfies needs. From an other-centered paradigm, the genuine concern is directed toward the growth and development of the spouse. Couched in this concern for the life and growth of the spouse is an ability to look at one's companion as a real person with feelings, thoughts, and emotions, rather than an object, an obstacle, or a source of irritation. With this type of perspective, there is an absence of exploitation. The focus is not on how profitable a spouse is, how useful a companion might be, how satisfying, fair, or equitable the relationship is--rather, as one couple put it, "how effective we are in making each other

happy" (C-28, 7). This view also augments the value of the spouse and importance of the relationship. With such a view of one's companion,

> The disagreements you have take on a different tone. I mean, the flamboyant emotional self-pity hurt type of things--you tend to get rid of those and you realize that you don't want to hurt this person anymore. You realize we have had this disagreement, and this is what we need to do to resolve it. (C-7, 13)

> You need to realize that we are first, not our job, not the church, but Beth and I are first. That's what it is. . . . There are couples around here--the husband is always working and she's at home alone, or she is this and that, and career oriented. They are each seeking their own. (C-52, 15)

An Other-centered Perspective of Marital Responsibility

A self-centered orientation of marital responsibility places the blame for problems on the spouse, other people, circumstances, or upbringing. From such a perspective, it is usually someone else's fault that things are not going the way they should. Common indicators of this perspective are phrases such as "You make me so angry," "That's just the way I am," "It's not my fault," and "I can't help it; that's the way I was raised." In an other-oriented approach, the spouse tends to accept responsibility for his/her own feelings and behavior.

Although it is natural for human beings to justify mistakes and blame others for unwanted feelings and situations, the couples in this sample with some of the best relationships were more prone to assume responsibility for

their own feelings and concentrate more on what *I can do* to improve the situation, than what *my spouse should do*.

> The only thing I can change is me. I can't change them, and I have to discover what I am doing to contribute to a problem and not contributing to the solution and that I have to do what I can to resolve it in my mind, in my attitude and performance. (H-7, 25)

> I guess I look at it as you have to be committed enough to this person and love them, . . . and you can't think that you are going to change this person. (W-23, 21)

> If there is a point of contention, we are both willing to look at it and say, "Well maybe I'm wrong." (C-50, 6)

> I started to look at the situation differently. . . . I was the major cause of her depression because I was gone all the time with school, and all those pressures, and I didn't realize it. . . . I started saying to myself what do I need to change? Now we can sit down and talk about our problems and resolve them. (H-40, 8-10)

See figure #5 for a visual representation of this other-centered paradigm and figure #6 for a side-by-side comparison the self-centered vs. the other-centered paradigm.

Figure 5

CREATING HIGH-QUALITY MARRIAGES

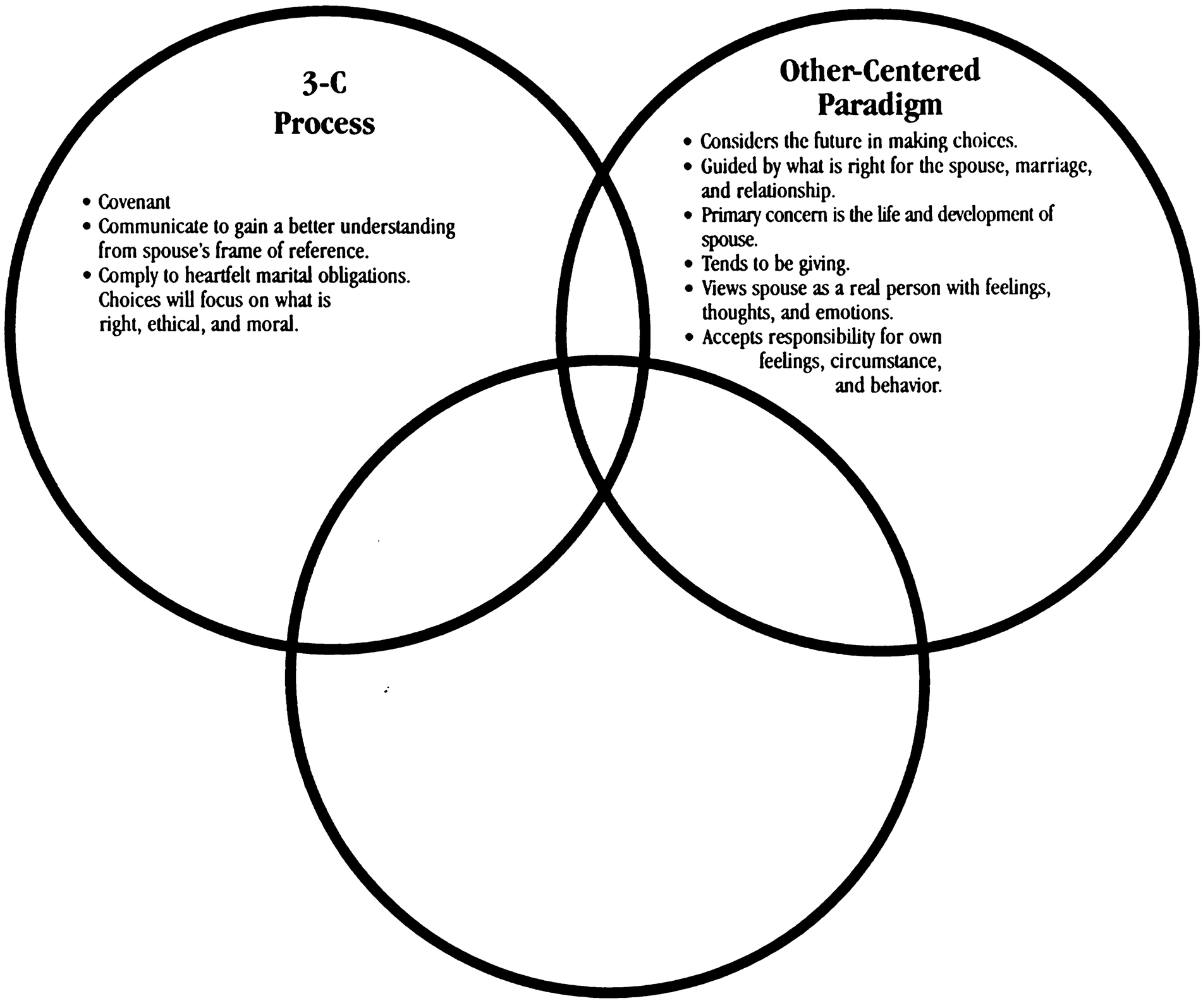


Figure 6

TWO PARADIGMS OF MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS

Other-Centered

Self-Centered

Perspectives of Marriage

- Considers the future in making choices.
- Guided by what is right for the spouse, marriage, and relationship.

- Emphasizes the moment.
- Focuses on what is best for me right now.

Perspectives of Spouse

- Primary concern is life and development of spouse.
- Tends to be giving.
- Views spouse as a real person with feelings, thoughts, and emotions.

- Primary focus is the life and growth of self.
- Concerned with receiving.
- Views spouse as object, vehicle to what I want, and obstacle to what I don't have.

Perspectives of Marital Responsibility

- Accepts responsibility for own feelings, circumstances, and behavior.
- Focuses on what "I" can do to make the situation better.

- Places responsibility of unwanted feelings and circumstances on others.
- Focuses on what others should do to improve the situation.

A CHARACTERISTIC OF HIGH-QUALITY MARRIAGE

In the analysis of these data, love seems to be everywhere and without question is *the* characteristic of the high-quality marital relationships. Love is congruent with almost every other category, yet it does not comfortably fit into any particular one. It is mentioned in almost every interview and is particularly dominant in the responses of the couples with extremely happy relationships. However, I found it difficult to classify love as any specific part of the paradigm model. Love is too inclusive to relegate it as an antecedent condition, too interactive to be an intervening condition, and too general to be part of the context. At one point in my analysis I placed love as the phenomenon, but it just did not fit as well as a more general category like high-quality marital relationships. In another draft I considered love as the primary intervening condition, only to drop it in favor of economic, cultural, and religious "conditions." In my attempts to make sense of how love relates to the rest of the data, several relevant ideas finally surfaced. It became evident that love is as much a part of the paradigm and the process as it is the reward. For several of the respondents, love is not only viewed as a reward of a great relationship, but also the requisite. It is not only that which defines a good marriage but also that which propels it. When asked what the secret to success in marriage is, several couples responded similar to this:

> (W) I would say for me it would be our love, my love for him. (H) I would have to say love--the love of my family keeps me dedicated to make this marriage work. I love her and wouldn't do anything to harm that relationship, even though I might at the moment be angry. (C-28, 10-11)

At first glance, the quality of love and the concept of a high-quality marriage may appear to be synonymous. In fact, there are several similarities. Yet conceptually, they are different in that love is an attitude, an activity, and an emotion, while the concept of a high-quality marriage is an outcome.

Noller (1996), in defining the kind of love that supports marriage and family, orchestrates her analysis around the assumption that love has three components: cognitive, behavioral, and emotional. The couples interviewed in this study use three similar components in their descriptions of high-quality marriages. However, rather than using the words "cognitive, behavioral, and emotional," they describe the three components of love as unity, companionship, and affection.

Unity was described as "pulling together as a cohesive unit," "working together," "supporting each other in everything we do," "pulling together," and "heading in the same direction." Another couple with an exceptional marriage described it this way:

> It's the idea that you have to plan things together and work things out together. It is not always a matter of "here's all the stuff that needs to be done. Let's split it down the middle. You take this half and I'll take that." That's not the way it works; it's a coordinated working. (C-7, 13)

The descriptions of *companionship* include statements like "spending time together," "having someone to be with and not being alone," "having someone to talk to," having someone to do things with," and "coming to each

other for ideas." When asked what the most gratifying part of marriage is, one wife stated:

> The closeness of one as a person was the best thing--the companionship, whether it is going to the store together or going to the movies together. I think that the companionship is the best thing. (W-12, 23)

A couple with one of the better marital relationships described it this way:

> Having someone there that I knew I could trust, that respected me. More than that, companionship. I just loved coming home to somebody I could talk to, somebody that's willing to listen to me, and somebody who never belittles my opinion. It has been very, very satisfying and I treasure that. . . . You know, we just can't wait to get home from work and it's a contest who can talk to whom first about the day at work and the things that happened and all that kind of stuff. It is very meaningful to both of us. (C-8, 12, 31)

Different descriptions of the component of *affection* were "a genuine liking of each other," "a feeling of attraction," and "having someone to kiss and hug." Two spouses with extremely high-quality marital relationships simply said:

> He's very affectionate, and he tells me he loves me all the time. (W-10, 46)

> I think she is a very beautiful woman. I am naturally attracted to her long hair, and she knows it. (H-7, 28)

There is a sense that love, in a marriage relationship, is incomplete without a balance of all three components. For example, the common phrase "talk is cheap" illustrates the dilemma of having loving *words* without loving *activities*. *Activities* not coupled with a loving *emotion* tend to be received as shallow, manipulative, or fake. All the loving *emotion* in the world seems incomplete without the *words* "I love you."

Another point of interest is that the loving relationships in this study do not have equal proportions of each dimension. Each relationship has very subtle, yet different combinations of the cognitive, behavioral, and emotional components. Some relationships have a nice mix of all three components. Others seem to be missing one or two of them. If a couple exude companionship and unity, but lack the component of affection, there is a sense that something is missing from the relationship. It just does not have that spark and feeling of vitality that some of the more balanced relationships do. The same could be said about marriages marked with much affection but lacking companionship or unity. An appropriate balance of each component seems to be important. Each marital relationship is unique, differentiated by subtle mixes of each dimension. None of the relationships in this sample were perfect, nor were any exactly the same. Yet every extremely loving companionship seems to exude a healthy balance of all three components.

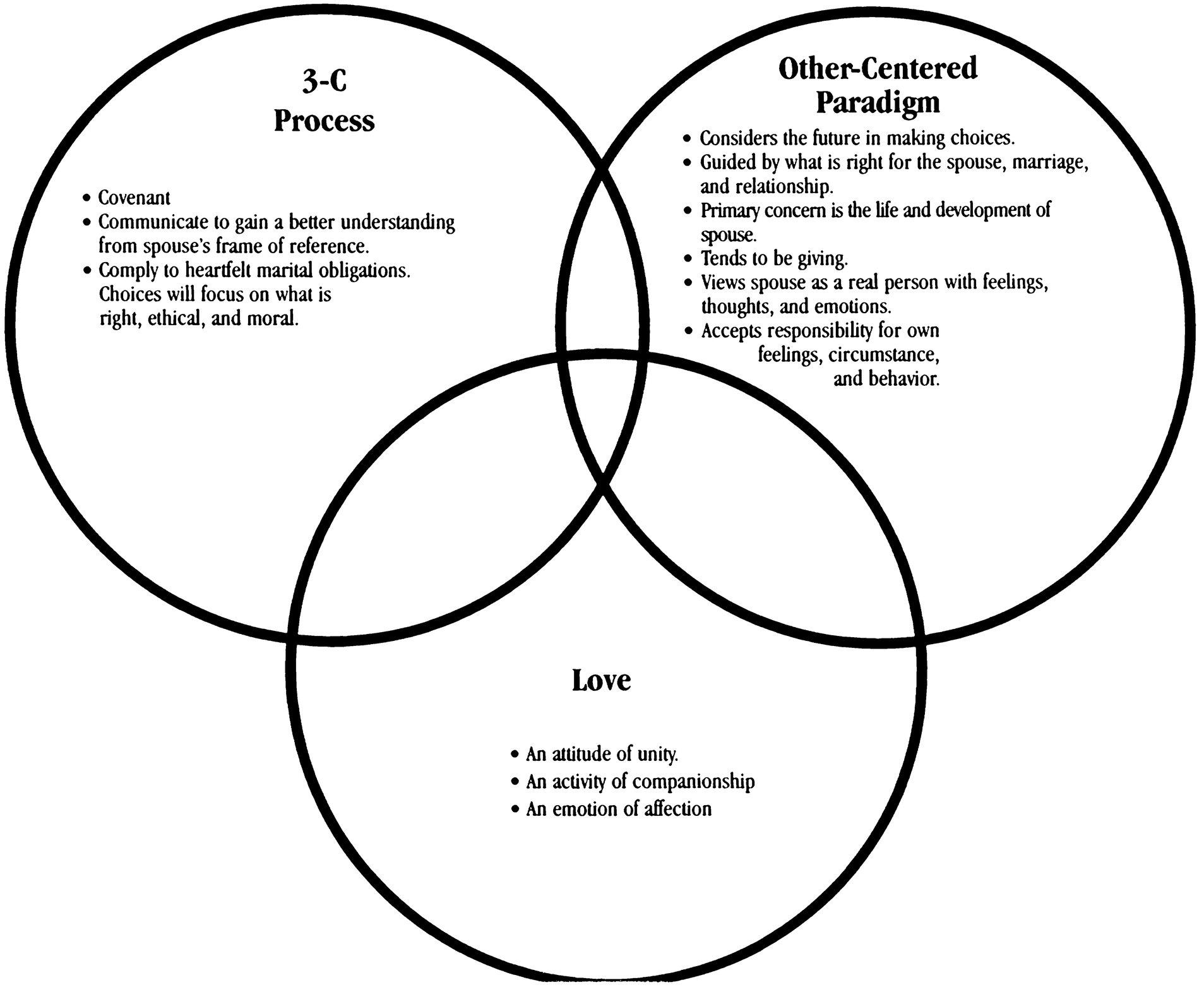
Erich Fromm (1956, p. 18) described love as "primarily giving, not receiving." If this is true, then several important assumptions about love deserve our attention. First, love is primarily relational. It requires the existence of another to whom something is given. Second, love springs from a heartfelt desire to benefit the life of another. If the activity is initiated by a feeling other than to help or benefit the life and development of another

person, it is not love. Finally, love cannot be the result of compulsion or force. If a spouse's behavior is forced, manipulated, or coerced, it is not love. See figure #7 for a visual representation of love in relation to the 3-C process and an other-centered paradigm.

With these thoughts in mind, it should be clear that marriage is a perfect context for the optimum experience of love. Other than the family realm, I cannot think of another situation that would be any better for the expression and experience of love. Yet we must be mindful of several cautions, and some questions must be asked. Is a sexual experience between a married couple an expression of love, if they are doing it for self-satisfaction? Is sexual intimacy between two fourteen-year-old high school students love? Is it love to tell a spouse that you like the meal when you really don't? Is it possible to force a spouse to love you? What might be the most effective way to enhance the level of love in your relationship?

Figure 7

CREATING HIGH-QUALITY MARRIAGES



GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF HIGH-QUALITY MARRIAGE

As properties, dimensions, and ranges of high-quality marriages were more fully developed, several insights regarding the nature of high-quality marriages emerged. I refer to these as general principles of high-quality marriages, meaning that they are not about one particular marriage, but principles regarding the nature of high-quality marriages in general. These ideas work in conjunction with, and at the same time help us better understand the process, paradigm, and characteristic that has been described. They demand our attention and deserve a discussion because of the way in which they help us understand how it all fits together. According to the respondents of this study, high-quality marriages are mutually created, require constant nurturing, and are dynamic.

High-Quality Marriages are Mutually Created

The term *mutually* underscores the impact of both partner's participation in the marital process. Whether through action or non-action, verbal or nonverbal, commitment or withdrawal, the choices of both partners have an effect of the quality of the relationship. It seems, however, that the creation of a high-quality marital relationship demands the best efforts of both partners, not just one. One partner can contribute to marital dysfunction, but the efforts of both partners are necessary to achieve maximum quality. If either of the partners gives up, loses his or her desire to work together, or becomes distracted by other activities, it can frustrate the process. When asked "What makes your marriage strong and successful?" the ten couples

with the best relationship punctuated the idea that *both* partners need to be involved in the marital process.

> I think both my wife and I really try to make our marriage work, and I think that's a big factor . . . where I feel successful in our marriage. I feel good about the things that we're doing, that we're trying to do. We work with each other, and I think that's the point. (H-25, 18)

> I say probably that we are both willing to give in. (C-50, 6)

> You have to work with what you have got, and you both have to give a little bit. (W-23, 21)

At first glance, it is obvious that "both" partners need to be involved and that "both" need to work together. However, a closer look at the phrases reveals something very specific that "both" need to be doing. Both need to be "willing to give in." Both "have to give a little bit." Both have to "work with each other." What does it mean in a marital context to "give in," "give a little bit," and "work with each other?" What is being given? What are they giving in to? In what way are spouses required to work together?

Based on the comments of couples with some of the best marital relationships, both couples need to give up personal desires for the good of the relationship. Both partners must be willing to give in to what they feel is right for the marriage--as opposed to self. Both must be willing to work with each other for the good of the marriage, rather than focusing on self-fulfillment . One husband summarized the idea this way:

> The most difficult part of marriage is that you have to be a little bit unselfish. There is one other person that you have to take care of, and you just can't do everything you want all the time. I think that is healthy. (H-50. 16)

The term *created* was chosen to imply an active and ongoing process which the couples are continually part of and contribute to. High-quality marital relationships are not something these couples found, stumbled across, or inherited; rather, they are created. Similarly, miserable marital relationships, although easier to "stumble" into, are also the creation of the couple. The couple's environment, circumstances, and parental role models constitute the framework within which marital decisions spring, but for the respondents of this study, contextual issues by themselves neither explained nor were consistently associated with marital quality.

Several couples, with extremely dysfunctional family-of-origin experiences or debilitating circumstances, seemed to have very happy marriages. Not all but at least four of the ten couples with high-quality marital relationships came from family of origin circumstances that should have been quite debilitating. One wife describes her family of origin this way:

> I grew up in a home where my father was an alcoholic and not a member of the church. My parents did not have a very good relationship for the first nine years of my life and then he went to AA and was sober for three years, but died shortly after that. I only had three years of good memories of them together. . . . He'd come home drunk and I remember him beating my mother and all kinds of the worst things you can imagine . . . When he was drunk

> he was awful and I remember him hitting on my oldest sister, I remember him trying to hurt her and jumping on her. (W-55, 20-22)

Her husband came from a similar background.

> I think it more traumatic for me than it was for my brothers because I remember my parents fighting so much before their divorce. That was one of the things that when we got married, I did not want a divorce at any cost. That was one thing that I never wanted to happen when I got married. . . . The divorce was real rough on me for a period of time and then finally I just . . . stopped seeing my father very much. . . . My kids wouldn't recognize him. We don't really exchange gifts or card or anything at birthdays. (H-55, 5-7)

The challenges continued after they were married.

> I was not a very good cook. . . . I just couldn't cook, everything I made was a flop. . . . He got an ulcer when we first got married and he also got mono and lost about twenty-five pounds. He just looked awful and I felt like it was all my fault and his mother was worried and thought I was killing her son. (W-55, 23)

In spite of challenging family of origin circumstances on both sides of the family and problems during the first years of their marriage, this couple have been able to create a wonderful marital relationship. The wife describes her marriage this way.

> It all comes back to how wonderful I feel, how happy it can be and how fulfilled you can feel and how kind he is. I still am amazed at the kindness he shows. It is wonderful to see him out there growing the beans and picking the beans and then canning the beans. He does a lot of things that typical men don't do. That makes me feel like I'm an equal and he takes his chores and I take mine and we do them together. . . . He invites his friends over and says, "This is my wife, this is what she does. This is her yard." He always tells me that I am pretty and beautiful. . . . He tells me that he loves me time and time again every day. . . . I bet he has told me today twice already and he has only been home from work since five. . . . He is always complementing me. (W-55, 24-27)

Two of the ten couples with great marriages had rather severe circumstantial challenges that did not seem to erode the quality of their relationship. For example, the husband of couple number thirty-eight is out of work. He feels inadequate as a husband and troubled that he has not found employment for over three months. Their income is meager. His wife works full-time, even though she hates having to be away from the home. Yet, despite the circumstances, she made the comment about their marriage.

> After eight years of marriage I look at him and I still think he's practically perfect--he really is. I listen to my friends and my neighbors complain about their husbands--they won't do this and they won't do that, they are such jerks and they don't help! And I'm thinking to myself, I can't think of anything bad to say about him! He helps me so much. He just always knows what to do and say. (W-38, 31)

One husband with a high-quality marriage, described his upbringing as follows.

> I was pretty moody as an adolescent, I was really emotional. I go pretty depressed a lot of times, but I was always inward about it. I remember putting on all the sad songs, moping around the house and thinking, "Oh, I just wish I could kill myself." . . . As a family we were not well off financially . . . my dad is kind of a mountain man type. . . . We never went anywhere very often, but when we did we always hoped the car wouldn't break down. My father came from a background of alcoholism on both sides, multiple marriages, and divorces. (H-8, 8)

Despite a rather rough family of origin, here is how his wife describe their marital relationship.

> I don't have any worries. I think marriage is wonderful. I do. I just love it. . . . I have a husband who is just wonderful. (W-8, 32)

In the marital quality literature, economic adequacy, age at marriage, emotional stability, positive parental role-models, etc., are tightly associated with high-quality marriage. Among the ten high-quality marriages in this study, it wasn't so much circumstance and life experiences as it was their choices about, and responses to, what happened to them. The quality, then, is a creation that tends to lean a little more toward *how* couples deal with their challenges than to *what kind* of challenges they have.

> There are many trials that come into our lives that we don't have any control over. Sometimes people do make

wrong choices, . . . but you can make things that happen all right. You can work them out. Bad things happen, and our happiness is determined on how we handle them. Because there are lots of people that have miserable things happen that are still happy. (H-12, 15)

Another nuance in this narrative of marital quality is that similar circumstances and life experiences impacted each of the couples in different ways. For example, the divorce of parents strengthened the resolve of couples number eight and fifty-five to avoid similar experiences; for others, like the wife of couple number twelve, it sanctioned divorce as *the* means of resolving her marital challenges. Painful life experiences fostered growth in some marital relationships, and festered others. There is also evidence in this sample that brothers and sisters raised in the same family, by the same parents, with essentially the same parenting styles have very different marriages. Furthermore, the very same experiences are handled much differently by the same couples at various times during their marriage.

High-Quality Marriages Require Constant Nurturing

The mutual creation of a high-quality marriage requires consistent doses of care and attention for its growth and development. Two aspects of this nurturing process are noteworthy. The first is that high-quality marital relationships cannot be neglected. Marital relationships seem to be more similar to the "growth of a plant" than the typical "bank account metaphor" so commonly used in describing marital relationships. Among the couples in this study, consistent care of and regular attending to the marital relationship

are more productive for marital growth than a big deposit once or twice a month.

If the necessary nourishment is adequately provided in the early stages of the marriage, the young relationship grows quickly and gains the strength necessary to endure short periods of inclement weather, and even moderate periods of marital drought. However, if neglected for a prolonged period of time, the relationship will eventually stop growing and begin to die. Consistent daily efforts that nurture and groom relationships are necessary to combat the effects of marital mistakes and neglect.

> Just because you're married doesn't mean that you are home free. Each and every day you need to work at it, and you need to keep as much spark in your relationship as when you were dating. (C-7, 15)

> You have to work at it. If you don't work at it is like that scripture that says that faith without works is dead. Well, I think it is the same with marriage. It is a living entity and it has to be fed. You can't just slay the dragon and put it on the shelf and expect it to live happily ever after. It doesn't work that way. (H-7, 28)

One explanation for the need to be consistent in nurturing a marital relationship is the constant presence of human weaknesses and misunderstandings. Human beings are not perfect. Everyone has bad days, illness, tempers, disagreements, and misunderstandings. Additionally, when two different people, raised by different parents, with different backgrounds, who have different tastes, likes, and dislikes, are put together in a marital

relationship, human weaknesses do not disappear--they are often compounded. Even the couples in this study with the brightest and most loving relationships had arguments, misunderstandings, disagreements, and experiences fueled by rather intense feelings of anger. However, negative emotions like anger, bitterness, and resentment do not have to cripple a marriage, if there is a counterbalanced proportion of affection, companionship, and unity. Hence the need for constant nurturing.

Another possible reason we need to be consistent in nurturing our marital relationships is that negative emotions and experiences in a marriage seem to have a much longer *shelf-life* than acts of kindness and compassion. Couples tend to remember their spouses' mistakes much longer than their virtues. Faults, weaknesses, and disappointments seem to be more quickly recalled and maintain a stronger presence in marital relationships than simple acts of kindness, care, and concern. Because of this *shelf-life syndrome*, constant and consistent efforts to nourish a relationship in a positive way are paramount to the important healing processes of forgiving and forgetting each other's inadequacies.

These two ideas, put together, add an interesting perspective to Gottman's (1991) explanation of why marriages succeed or fail. He found that even though happily married couples have arguments, *how* they deal with disagreements in their marriage is the key predictor of marital separation. He explains that if the husband establishes a pattern of emotional withdrawal after arguing with his wife, the marriage is on its way toward separation and divorce. The information derived from this study not only agrees with Gottman's conclusions, but might help explain why patterns of emotional withdrawal are so devastating to a relationship. If healthy marriage

relationships require constant nurturing, the emotional withdrawal of either partner would eliminate the positive nurturing that is so necessary for quality growth. In addition to avoiding patterns of emotional withdrawal after a misunderstanding, the ideas from this study inform us that it would also be profitable to prescribe an overdose of nurturing activities.

A feeling expressed by several of our respondents (with a hint of surprise) is that this nurturing process, because of human weakness, ill feelings, and a natural tendency for self-fulfillment, requires a little more effort than they anticipated.

> It's been different than I thought--harder than I thought. I always knew marriage would take a lot of work, and I was convinced that I would do that. It's harder to put in that work than I had realized. It seems like sometimes your spouse is last priority, where your time goes. It shouldn't be. (C-28, 5)

High-quality Marriages are Dynamic

The most consistent aspect of marital quality is that it changes perpetually.

> (H) It's a dynamic marriage, I guess. (W) We've been through so many things together, it seems like. You hear about all these things people go through in their marriage, and I feel like we have gone through everything. (C-34, 16)

Marital relationships seem to be created by couples' choices about and responses to a myriad of ongoing and ever-evolving circumstantial and developmental life experiences. These life experiences create ongoing changes that require a vast array of responses, an immense amount of flexibility, and many adjustments. This is particularly true of the first few years of marriage.

> The whole first year of marriage was a surprise. I was supposed to fix meals and go shopping. I had to do laundry. The first three months of marriage I cried because I was away from my family. It was new, and I was having to learn about how to take care of a home. Then the next nine months I cried because I was pregnant, and that was a whole new set of emotions. Certainly, the sex was a new thing. It was no, no, no, and then suddenly it is a yes, yes, yes. To change in one day was just not easy. (W-19, 28)

The changes are not relegated to just the first few years of marriage. They continue:

> I'm learning every day that my ideas and perceptions of certain things are often inaccurate . . . and change. (W-10, 16)

All these changes and a couple's response to them influence, in some way or another, the quality of the relationship. Some choices seem to greatly strengthen the relationship; other day-to-day choices weaken it. Every choice, however small or insignificant, has some effect on marital quality.

Over time, the marital relationship changes according to the care or the neglect it receives. For most couples, the quality of marriage fluctuates at varied and different times throughout the entire marital experience. Some fluctuate in an upward direction.

> Every year of our marriage has gotten better--more love for each other and more happiness and security. (C-28, 7)

Others fluctuate downward.

> We had been married about three-and-one-half years. . . . She took the trip to Chicago to visit her mother and phoned me from Chicago the day before she was due to come back. She said that she was going to stay in Chicago. I asked her how long she wanted to stay-- . . . a week, . . . a month, . . . more than a month? She said she wanted to stay there permanently. (H-12, 6)

The directional key to this fluctuation seems to be the quality of both spouses' participation, coupled with the consistency with which they nurture their relationships. How are these relationships nurtured? According to the previously described conclusions, high-quality marriages are nurtured by a behavioral process (covenant, communicate, and comply), coupled with a particular way of thinking (an other-centered paradigm), which engenders a characteristic of love (with an appropriate balance of affection, companionship, and unity)--remembering that these kinds of relationships are mutually created, require constant nurturing, and are dynamic.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

An Answer To The Question "Why"

In his fifty-year review of family research, Nye (1988) acknowledges a massive accumulation of marital information but questions the usefulness of this information in helping us understand *why* some marriages succeed and *why* others end in divorce. Here is one possible answer to that question.

I infer from the data that high-quality marriages have three components: a paradigm (cognitive), a process (behavioral), and a characteristic of love (emotional). In the previous chapter these three components have been described separately for explication purposes, but in reality they are not sequential, linear, or distinct. Because of the interrelationship of these three components, I suggest that three components would be more accurately described as three *dimensions* of high-quality marriages. For example, the very thought that "I need to be more concerned about my spouse" (other-centered paradigm), can dramatically impact complying with spousal needs (3-C process), as well as displaying affection (love). Any choice to think can simultaneously be a choice to do and feel. A choice made in any one of these areas can theoretically have a simultaneous effect on the others. Therefore, when these dimensions are put together, I have chosen the visual representation of a single three-dimensional sphere, rather than three separate interconnected circles. I will refer to this imaginary, three-dimensional realm as a *sphere of high-quality marital choices.*

Within this sphere of choices, I place all the choices, activities, and behaviors that are associated with the process, paradigm, and characteristic of exceptional marriages. This *sphere of high-quality marital choices* circumscribes any choice or activity having to do with the 3C process of covenant, communication, and compliance. For example, any choice to become more willing to bear a spouse's burdens, the choice to communicate in an attempt to better understand those burdens from the spouse's perspective, the choice to comply to one's HMOs, or any choice to be more ethical and moral in a marital relationship would all be found within this sphere. Choices to the contrary--those which detract from the creation of high-quality marriages--would be a choice outside this sphere.

It is suggested that there are two general ways of thinking--an other-centered paradigm and a self-centered paradigm. Since other-centered choices are associated with high-quality marriages, I have placed these kind of choices inside sphere of high-quality marital choices. Self-centered choices are those outside the sphere. Therefore, any choice that considers the future of spouse and family (as opposed to what is best for me right now), a choice to make the growth and development of one's spouse a priority, or a decision to accept responsibility for one's own behavior, would be a choice from within this sphere of high-quality marital choices. Choices that emphasize the moment, or are concerned only with self, or a view of one's spouse as only as a vehicle to what I want or an obstacle to what I don't have, or that focus on what others should do to improve unwanted marital situations, would theoretically come from outside this sphere.

Any act that enhances the characteristic of love in a relationship would also be found within this sphere of high-quality marital choices. Any choice

that leads to developing the attitude of unity, the activity of companionship, or the emotion of affection would be those found inside the sphere.

Finally, this sphere of high-quality marital choices would presume mutuality in the creation of marital quality, require regular nurturing, and anticipate some change. The choice to work together, nurture a relationship more consistently, or to plan for or work through changes, rather than abandoning ship, would also be found inside.

These choices represent all three of the fundamental dimensions--behavioral, cognitive, and emotional. They are central to the creation of high-quality marriages and therefore represent the critical domain of marital happiness. The very act of choosing any of the infinite possibilities from within this sphere, would theoretically enhance the quality of a marital relationship.

What invites couples to choose from within this *sphere of high-quality marital choices*? What helps couples stay congruent with the kind of choices that support high-quality marital relationships? I suggest that it all begins with the act of keeping one's covenant. Devotion to the conditions of the covenant turns one's focus away from self and sets the stage for more effective communication and an increased compliance with heartfelt marital obligations. Therefore the *invitation* to choose from the options within this sphere comes from participating in the 3-C process. The behaviors of this 3C process tend to *facilitate* paradigmatic shifts to an other-centered orientation--a cognitive orientation that seems to be necessary for the creation of high-quality marital relationships. Put together, this process and paradigm establish the context in which love flourishes. Love *maintains* the momentum and provides the motivation for a couple to "stick with it." In summary,

participation in the process, paradigm, and characteristic tends to invite, facilitate, and maintain a couple's focus on the options from within this *sphere of high-quality marital choices.*

This *sphere of high-quality marital choices* represents the ultimate context for the creation of a high-quality marriage--except for one dilemma: the best efforts of *both* spouses are required to create high-quality marriages, not just one. If both spouse operate from within this three-dimensional sphere of choices, they not only create the ultimate environment for a high-quality marriage, but at the same time they select the types of marital activities that tend to nurture and strengthen relationships. The result is a high-quality marital relationship.

If one spouse makes choices from within this sphere while the other spouse chooses options from outside, this split can cause some difficulties for the effective creation of high-quality relationships. Such a scenario would allow for some happy moments, but they wouldn't come as easily or be as pronounced as if both spouses were operating from within the sphere of choices. My guess is that there would be an equal mix of some good times along with the difficult, creating a relationship quality that would be average--as long as one spouse is willing to provide for the self-oriented spouse's needs.

If both spouses are consistent in making choices outside this sphere, it creates an extremely difficult context for marital quality. Both would emphasize the moment, rather than consider the future. Both spouses would focus on what is best for "me." Each spouse would be primary concerned about him or herself and place responsibility for unwanted feelings and circumstances on the other. There would be a continual struggle for control

and dominance. If such a couple were to stay married, I would be somewhat surprised to find anything other than a low-quality marriage.

This new look at some old but very important issues in marital relaitonships conveys several possible explanations *why* some marriages are so successful and *why* other marriages end in divorce. See figure #8 for a visual representation of spousal orientations to the sphere of high-quality marital choices and the resultant quality of marriage.

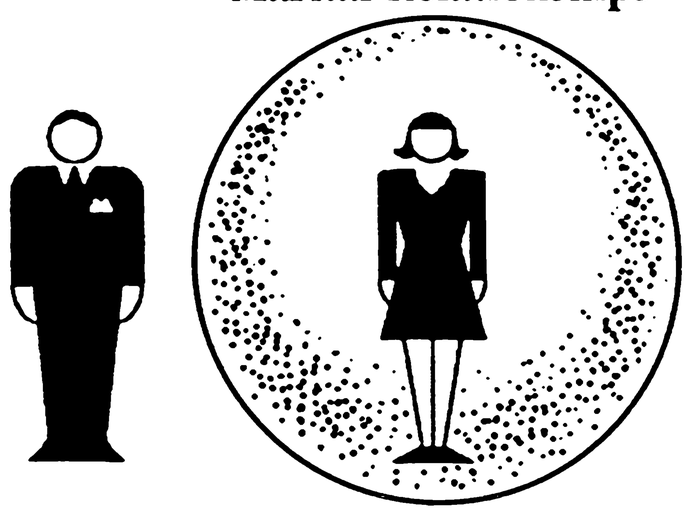
The final segment of this chapter will discuss how the results of this study might be beneficial to relationships that need minor tune-ups, those needing major adjustments, and pre-marital relationships.

Figure 8

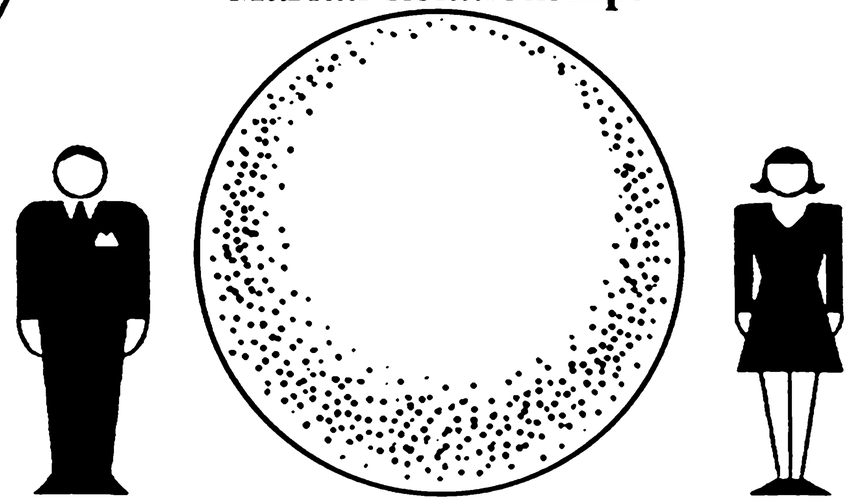
SPOUSAL ORIENTATIONS TO THE SPHERE OF HIGH-QUALITY MARITAL CHOICES AND THE RESULTANT QUALITY OF MARRIAGE

High-Quality Marital Relationships

Average-Quality Marital Relationships



Low-Quality Marital Relationships



Relationships in need of minor tune-ups

I suggest that high-quality marital relationships are dynamic, living, ever-changing entities that are mutually created and must be constantly nurtured. These insights about the nature of high-quality marriages, might be helpful to couples who are not divorced, but are unhappily mired in mediocre marriages, or perhaps couples who are happy but just want to add a little enchantment to their marital endeavors. From either a therapist's or a self-help perspective it would be profitable to explore several areas of a relationship regarding the nature of high-quality marriage. The couple might want to examine their awareness and acknowledgement of developmental and circumstantial changes in their marital context. Are the best efforts of both partners being exercised? Are both spouses in this partnership giving up selfish desires and giving in to what they feel is best for the relationship? Do they understand that for most adults, a good marriage is a more important requisite to happiness than educational achievements, positions of influence, or financial success? How consistent are they is nurturing and grooming their marital relationship? With what kinds of choices and activities do they nourish their relationship? I posit the notion that for most relationships needing just a minor marital "tune up," the application of the concepts regarding the nature of high-quality marriage might be sufficient. If a married couple are aware of and acknowledges the changes in their life, if they are consistent in nurturing their relationship, and if both partners are giving their best other-centered efforts, this would seem sufficient to sustain the marital growth in a positive direction.

Relationships in need of major repairs

I also suggest that high-quality marital relationships are undergirded by a certain process, paradigm, and a characteristic of love. For couples that need a mechanical overhaul of their marriage, rather than a simple tune-up, it might be productive to consider all three dimensions (behavioral, cognitive, and emotional), rather than just one or two. A productive way to begin the analysis might be to evaluate the behavioral dimension--what a couple are *doing* to create their relationship. What kind of covenants have they made? Are they aware of the conditions of the covenant? How devoted are they to keeping these obligations. Are both spouses putting forth their best efforts? Are they communicating with each other? Do they know, for example, what the burdens of their spouse are? Do they manifest a mutual willingness to bear each other's burdens? Are they able to understand one another from their spouse's perspective? Does each spouse comply to what he or she feels is right, ethical, and moral? Are there HMOs that are being disregarded? Can they identify the general types of choices that both *build* and *break* the quality of their relationship?

Another focus of analysis might be the cognitive dimension of marriage, i.e., how the couple are *thinking*. Do they consider the future and are they guided by what is right for the spouse, marriage, and relationship as they make choices, or do they tend to emphasize the moment and focus on what is best for *me* right *now*? What is each spouse's primary and heartfelt concern? Are they more concerned about giving or receiving? Do they view each other as real people with feelings, thoughts, and emotions, or do they view each other as a vehicle to what they want or obstacle to what they don't have? Do

they each accept responsibility for their own feelings, circumstance, and behavior?

A final dimension of assessment has to do with the characteristic of love, i.e., the emotional realm. Is the love they describe other-centered? Are both spouses inspired by a desire to make the other happy, or does their focus seem to be self-satisfaction? Is their attitude one of unity? Are there any activities of companionship? Are there any manifestations of emotion? Is there a balance of unity, companionship, and affection in the relationship? If not, what is missing and where can the couple improve?

These type of questions have application in clinical settings, in self-help situations, and in marriage enrichment seminars. In each of these situations it is paramount that all three dimensions be addressed. I propose that it would be unwise and ineffective to work with only one dimension and ignore the other two. For example, if a therapist decided to focus on enhancing a couple's level of commitment, but ignored the paradigmatic orientation from which their commitment springs, it is possible that the couple could concentrate on being more committed to self-development, self-fulfillment, and self-satisfaction. According to the results of this and other studies, such an approach might be counter productive to the marital happiness they seek. Because of the systemic nature of these three dimensions, I believe that all three need to be considered for the best possibility of success.

Premarital Relationships

These ideas also have application for premarital counselors, marriage preparation classes, and premarital compatibility tests. If a young college student asked "What qualities in a spouse are most essential for marital success?" What would be *your* answer? A good education, congruent values, financial stability, and religious homogamy could be recommended. The list might also include intelligence, a good work ethic, an even temperament, being outgoing, or having high morals. It might also include finding someone who is not obsessed with power and control. Based on the results of this study, I suggest that *both* prospective partners (1) be devoted to keeping covenants, communicate to better understand how to benefit spouse, and comply to heartfelt marital obligations; (2) tend to be other-centered; and (3) have a well-balanced ability to love (unity, companionship, affection).

The concepts of process, paradigm, characteristic, and governing principles seem to be consistent with the ten high-quality marriages in this sample. Although thought provoking, these concepts require further research to gain credibility for the ideas, better assess their generalizability, and better understand the process by which an other-centered paradigm is created and maintained.

These are strong statements and bold assertions, given that the ideas have come from just one project. Further research is also needed to assess the credibility of these paradigmatic propositions, to evaluate the generalizability of the other-centered assumptions, and to document the effect of this paradigmatic orientation on couples outside the narrow religious and

cultural parameters of this sample. Do these ideas have any validity among couples with other religious beliefs? Are they relevant among couples with no religious beliefs? Would they be consistent among couples of other cultures and in different societies around the world?

If the ideas of this study are attested in other marital contexts, this knowledge would be helpful in several important areas. It would be fascinating and helpful to create a test or measurement that could quickly and accurately assess a person's self vs. other-orientation. A little more consideration of these paradigmatic issues could be more consistently woven into marriage enhancement seminars, marriage preparation classes, clinical settings, and premarital compatibility tests.

The concept of paradigmatic shifts also holds wonderful possibilities as an effective way to facilitate a change in attitude, invite a change in behavior, and overcome feelings of loneliness, separation, and certain types of anxiety. However, this area will also require further research. We need to better understand what initiates paradigmatic shifts. Do they occur randomly? Are they associated with certain activities or are they self-initiated? Are they in any way tied to developmental issues? I have probably created more questions in this study than I have answered. But concluding where I began, "we cannot afford to give up on such important questions." (Nye, 1988, p. 315)

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Couple Questions

Courtship

Let's see, you were married in _____ of 1979, right? What day were you married?

Tell me about your courtship. How did you two meet?

What was your impression the first time you remember seeing him/her?

When did you begin to feel she was more than just another date? What was happening or had happened?

Why were you attracted to him/her? What was it about him/her that made you want to go out with her/him?

What was it that made you want to continue to date him/her?

What was it that made you want to continue to date him/her?

When did it begin to get really serious? What moved it from "maybe this is it" to "this is it!"?

How long had you dated before you were engaged? How long was your engagement?

Had you been engaged previously? Dated a lot?

After the engagement, or before for that matter, did you ever consider breaking off? Why?

Do you feel your engagement was too short, too long, or about right?

Marital Interaction

So where did you live and do (job or school) after you were married?

How was the initial adjustment to marriage?

How was marriage different than you expected? How was it like you had expected?

When was the most difficult time in your relationship? What contributed to this difficulty?

When was the happiest time in your relationship? Why?

Who is leader? How are major decisions made?

When there are disagreements, how are they resolved?

What are the things that you give your family strength, or cohesiveness? What 3 or 4 things bond you together?

What advice could you give someone contemplating marriage? What can they do to prepare?

Children

Let's finish off with your children. How was the pregnancy?

How was the birth?

What has it been like raising your children?

How do you discipline them?

How much time do you spend with your children? Do you need to spend more? Why don't you?

What are your prognostications for your children? Based on what you know now how do you think each will turn out?

Individual Questions

Courtship

What were your criteria for the person you wanted to marry (ideal mate)?

What did your friends and parents think of him/her?

What needs do you think you had that you thought your spouse would fulfill? Has she/he been able to fulfill them for you like you expected?

Why do you think she/he was attracted to you? What needs did she/he have that she/he wanted you to meet?

Family of Origin

Now let's switch emphasis a little, Tell me about your family and where you fit in.

How do you remember your childhood? Happy? Sad? traumatic?

How about your teenage years?

How do you remember your parents marriage?

How close do you think your parents were?

Was there anything in your parents' marriage you were determined not to repeat in your own?

Was there much affection shown in your family?

Was there much conflict in your partner's' marriage? Between you and your parents?

Was there any drug/alcohol abuse in your family?

How did they discipline you? Any physical or other kinds of abuse?

Who was the leader in your family? Who made most of the major decisions? Was there much sharing of decision making between your mom and dad?

Couple's Marriage

Let me ask you about how your relationship is now in a few areas that are of concern to most couples.

Are finances an area of concern or conflict?

Is the amount of time you have to spend together an are of concern or conflict?

Is there any concern or conflict about the sexual part of your relationship?

How about your communication?

What has been the most gratifying part of marriage for you personally? The most challenging or difficult?

What would you change in the relationship? How could it be improved?

How do you feel about yourself--your self-esteem? How does your spouse hurt or help your self-esteem?

How much time do you (or your spouse) spend at work? Do you wish you could spend more or less time at work, or is it about right?

How does work affect your marriage and family both negatively and positively?

What church calling do you have? Would you like to spend more or less time on your church calling?

How does it have negative or positive effects on your marriage and family?

How much time do you spend with relatives? Would you like more or less or is it about right?

Do relatives interfere or help family and marriage?

How much time do you spend without your spouse with a friend or friends. Like more, or less or same as now?

Do your friends affect the marriage or family in any way? Do spouses friends interfere or help?

How much do the two of you socialize with other couples? Like more, less, same?

Let's talk about stress and how you cope with it. What are the main stresses in your life right now?

How do you cope with stress?

How helpful is the gospel? prayer? Church membership?

How do they affect your marriage and family life?

How does your marriage compare to other marriages?

How does marriage compare to other alternatives such as career, travel, more money, single life-style (freedom, etc.)

How does your spouse compare to other possible spouses.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Why don't you start by telling me how you met.

(H) Well, we were back in L.A. in the summer of 78 on a UCLA program, a UCLA Seminar. That is basically how we met through that group. The group had different seminars together, usually on Friday we would hear some different government official speak or someone in the church maybe who worked back in Washington would come back and talk to us. So we met each other through that group.

(W) And also all students were housed in the same apartment complex.

(H) We had one date while we were there but it was more of a friendship type thing with part of the group and nothing really serious until later on when we went back to BYU and ran into each other again. That is how we met.

Did you just run into each other, or did you purposely meet?

(W) No, I came back to Provo for the summer because I was living in Provo, my mother had moved up to Provo and I was living at home. Mike came up that weekend for a recreational type weekend and I was in the administration building with my sister, she was looking for a summer job, and we ran into Mike in the lobby. I said "Oh Mike it is good to see you, what are you up for?" and he says "Oh just this that and the other."

Was it a holiday weekend?

(H) I don't think so, I think it was just a weekend.

(W) "Well, you know if you're not busy or doing anything we can throw together a picnic lunch or something and go and have a picnic or something you know. I don't know what your schedule is but if you're not busy..." So you called and we ended up going on this picnic up Spanish Fork canyon, no Hobble Creek Canyon. So we went on this picnic up Hobble Creek Canyon and we were just really having a good time and enjoying it and everything and then Mike all of a sudden started getting kind of nervous and anxious. I just though well, we have had a good time, it is about time to head back and everything, and then we were in the car, he is such an honest individual, it was like this guilt trip, this cloud hanging over him. Then he said, "I hate to tell you this, I've had such a good time today but I have to hurry and get back because I have another date this evening." It really came out to be that he came up to be with this other girl on the weekend. Then he said, "but I've had

such a good time this afternoon I would really like to take you to church tomorrow." I said, "That will be find, that's no problem." So we went to church the next day and started corresponding quite regularly, and I went up later in the summer to his home in Wenatchee, Oregon. Then he came up for school and once the school year started we were dating quite seriously into the school year, then got engaged in October.

(H) That summer, before we went to California, before I had met her I had dated a girl and I was kind of interested in her so I wrote her a couple of times, one or two, I can't remember. So that was the purpose I went up, to look her up again and see her that weekend. My brother was working in Provo Canyon at the time so I had a place to stay and it was kind of convenient and someone from my hometown just happened to be driving up that was so it all worked out. I went up and I had intended to look the other girl up and see her a few times that weekend and like Gertrude says we ran into each other at the Administrative Building and I could see quickly that things weren't working out with the other girl and that... So I guess it was kind of a nice surprise to run into Gertrude and feel like the weekend hadn't been totally wasted.

(W) But your question also mentioned like first impressions. I remember my first impression of Mike when we were in California (UCLA seminar) I was impressed from the very beginning. I thought he was a very capable person that just emulated a lot or qualities that I had always..... So I guess that I was probable more interested in him in California than you were in me. I was quite interested right from the beginning, but then when we left Washington and there was not contact I didn't really expect to hear from him again or anything, so that was kind of a nice chance meeting.

You were in Provo going to school?

(W) Yes.

What were you doing?

(H) For the summer, besides the seminar, I was working back home in Southern Oregon. I was going to go to school in the fall because I was already going to BYU also. We...you know after we got it going together strongly and things finally resulted in getting married, we decided in looking back that our paths would not have naturally crossed in Provo. Our classes were in different departments and we were in different wards and lived on different sides of campus and it was just... If it hadn't been for the program in Washington, unless some other circumstance had came up, that we got together.

So how soon did it start getting serious after that?

(W) Quite serious. October 17 was the day we were engaged but you asked me three weekends before that I think.

Did you date anymore during the summer or was it just that one weekend?

(W) No, well like I said I went to Wenatchee for one weekend and then he came up to school a week early in August. But we, like I said, corresponded, we wrote a lot of letters.

(H) Back in Washington, I remember when I first saw Gertrude, I remember a bunch of guys were...like she said we lived in the same housing complex. There were about four or five of us in another apartment down the street a ways in the same complex. I remember they came over just to socialize one afternoon or evening. I remember her. We had this, I think it was a bunkbed in our front room , they were pretty modestly furnished apartments, a bed, a small table and a kitchen. They crowded us, five or six of us in one apartment and there was a bunkbed in the front room and so that was something like a couch. I remember her sitting there talking with the group and I observed her and I just thought, well, she seems like a really nice person. I thought, she could make a really good wife for someone. I didn't have any selfish thoughts about it, like maybe I could get connected with her or anything. I just thought she seems like a really nice person. We did have one date while we were there, it was a double date. One of my roommates, or one of your roommates or just another girl that was there. One of my roommates, not the one we went double dating with, but another one was real interested in Gertrude and he would talk about his interest in Gertrude... You know how guys and girls get together and talk about girls, and he was always mentioning his interest and I was so exasperated that he wouldn't do anything about it; he would just talk about it and say how he wanted to and would never do it. I would get so mad that the wouldn't take some action, you know, so finally... You know, I thought she was nice, I dated several of the girls back there once. So I just asked her out and we went out on a double date. When we got back, or when I went up that weekend in Provo to see the other girl and that didn't work out and Gertrude and I spent the afternoon up Hobble Creek Canyon, I felt a very strong attachment then and allowed things to develop then. I guess you could say that is when I really got hooked and started pursuing the matter.

Why do you think there was this attachment or what ever you want to call it, or the attraction. It sounds like you dated quite a few girls. Why did it click? Why did it work?

(H) Well, I think one thing in my instance, I was looking. I considered myself one of these diehard LDS boys... I had something fixed in my mind from what I remembered or thought I remembered President Kimball saying that you should attend seminary, then your next priority should be to go on a mission, then come back and your next priority is to find a wife, an then after that finish your education. So I kind of, when I got off my mission I said "I need to find a wife" and I was pretty mentally actively involved in that process. Every time I dated a girl it was...Before my mission I had dated just to have fun and I didn't really want to get too attached and I knew that I had to go on my mission, so I just had fun more or less when I dated. I had come from a small high school where the syndrome kind of was, if you dated a girl once you were going steady. Because of that label people put on you that social pressure prevented me from dating as much as I wanted to as a junior and senior in high school just because I didn't want that label. I just wanted to have fun. I didn't want to be locked in to some relationship. When I got to college I had fun my freshmen year, but when I got back from my mission I tried to do the same thing; I tried to go back to having fun like I had before. I guess the process of having a companion on a mission and being a little older,

and having learned a matured, I found out I wasn't satisfied just to do the fun dates with different girls. I was starting to settle into a seeking for a companion pattern.

Then what moved it into this is really fun to... When did you make the decision that you wanted to marry each other. Did you think it happened about the same time or did he catch you off guard?

(W) He caught me off guard. With my neighbor I went to a conference in late September for a week down in Houston. I was down there for part of the school week and the weekend and when I came back... I remember thinking, you know, I am enjoying dating Mike and dating him and everything, and he invited me to his missionary reunion and that night he popped the question and I was totally surprised, I was totally surprised. That is why I said it took three weeks, I wasn't quite ready to answer yes immediately so it took me by surprise... I always thought while I was dating him there was never any question in my mind that he would be a good father and a good husband and all of those kinds of things. I was strongly physically attracted to him and that was a big part too. but it did take me by surprise when the question actually came.

When she didn't say yes immediately how did you feel?

(H) That took me a little by surprise I guess you know, because it had taken so much courage to get to that point. I figured it would just be a matter of time. I had a little bit of apprehension of what if she does decide not to, but she seemed... Even though she said not ye, I kind of felt a strong wanting her part but she just wanted to make sure....

(W) Well, I certainly didn't want to sever the relationship, even just thinking that I needed to take more time to see if that was what I wanted or not.

Had you been asked before?

(W) Yes.

So this was different?

(W) Yea this was different. That time I had been dating a guy that time for... Well, not too much longer, I guess about six months, and when he asked me it took me by surprise too, but he was one where the relationship, as far as I was concerned... I had a very very hard time communicating with him. His family was also in my Provo ward up there and I saw a lot of things within their family as far as communication that really bothered me, that really, really bothered me. At the time I told him I said, "You know this takes me by surprise and the communication just lets me know that I just really don't think that we are really quite on the same sheet of music or whatever." I answered no to that one quite immediately.

So you were engaged in October and married in?

(W) April

What date?

(W) The 27th. I should have let him answer that, to see how long it would have taken him.

(H) No, I know April 27 and September 10. I don't forget those two dates, that's her birthday.

Was there any time during your engagement period... It was a fairly long engagement by BYU standards... any time where you thought of breaking off your relationship?

(W) There was one very rocky point. I don't think I was ever... He thought I was at the point of breaking up.

(H) There was one time when I thought she was going to break it off and I got very worried. I guess it was during Christmas time I guess and there was just a lot happening and I guess I had been taking her for granted a bit. Because we were engaged and I guess I'm kind of the merit badge type person, once you get one thing earned then that is out of the way and you move on to the next. I guess it was just a foregone conclusion that things were going to work out and I had to learn that you have to always have the respect and that appreciation there. It is not the fairly tale thing where you go off and live happily ever after just because you slew the dragon or whatever. I had been neglecting her a little bit and there were things going on, my health wasn't very good; it never is during Christmas. I get so many things going and get so wound up... One night, I guess things had gotten too routine or I put her off too many times or what and she got very emotional and laid the law to me and so I started... Wow It really took me back and I was really concerned and I though... I remember going home an just feeling like, feeling the feeling that what if I lost her, and just that empty pity feeling. I'm glad it didn't happen that way.

And how did you come out of it, did you make some changes and were you satisfied with what he did?

(W) Yea, yea he immediately...

(H) What did I do?

(W) Well, it was like he said it was that week of finals and everything I remember thinking at the time, "You know I have just as many finals as he does, I'm just as involved in all of these kinds of things" You know I had mad these concessions and rearranged my schedule so that we could do this that or another and it seemed like just before we were ready he would call and cancel it. The one that really got to me was when he cancelled because he needed to run his sister's roommate out to. Oh he had cancelled for us to do something and when I got in touch with him what he had actually spent his time doing was running his sister's roommate out to a party. She lacked transportation, which was a very service minded type thing to do, but I thought well... but yea he immediately.....

(H) I don't remember that.

(W) Of course you don't remember that. I remember all the specifics. But yea he just immediately...He just didn't do those kinds of things any more. It was just a matter of pointing it out to him. I never really seriously considered breaking off the engagement or anything, I just thought it was something that needed to be brought to his attention. Then after that I'd have to admit that

the rest of our engagement was pretty smooth sailing, other than the headache of the arrangements and your last semester at school and all that kind of thing.

(H) Yea she was graduating and a week later we got married.

Given the LDS moral code, was the physical part difficult in that long of an engagement, had you kind of come to terms on that?

(W) I don't think it was that difficult. During the time I remember... We did not have any real affection before we were engaged and then we kissed somewhat and everything afterwards, but I don't think that was the whole basis during our engagement.

(H) I felt very attracted to her and just to be able to hold her had and put my arm around her... I had kind of made up my mind that I didn't want to get too heavily involved in kissing a girl until I was pretty sure that she was the right one. I had a girl friend in high school once and we had gotten involved in kissing and we had found out how enjoyable it was and I decided that I couldn't get that closely attached to somebody if it is not somebody... if it is not going to be a permanent arrangement. So I just kind of mentally set the goal...

(W) Yea I think that both of us had that strong, I mean both of us had grown up in the church in strong families and everything and there was a moral code that we should live be and that was reserved for marriage and we really didn't have much problem with that.

Looking back now do you think your courtship or engagement were too short, too long or just about right?

(W) Our courtship could have been longer, the engagement was just about right.

(H) Yea it could have been just a little longer perhaps to smooth more edges out. I remember when I first asked her to marry me and she finally gave her consent we tried to decide when and I was still in the pressures of school. I didn't want to do it during school I wanted to do it during break because I felt it was important to have time for a honeymoon. At least I had been taking the child development family relations courses, 360. I don't know if that is still a number but marriage and courtship. So anyway, that was one of the things that was brought out strongly, that the honeymoon was an important part and some people that would get married on the weekend and be back in school the following Monday and how... So we decided it had to be done at a break sometime. We thought, well, Christmas is kind of soon and... The other thing was that I had to go to summer camp the following summer for ROTC so we thought maybe I out to wait until all of that is out of the way.

(W) And my sister was on her mission and we wanted my sister back and if we had waited until the end of the summer she would have been back from her mission.

(H) Then that seemed like kind of a long ways away, and I know that I called my mom and I was really surprised when she said, "Well, why don't you do it at Christmas." That was just not my mom and I was surprised to hear that coming from her.

(W) But her comment was, "Oh sometimes it is kind of hard to wait on these kinds of things." But I don' think we ever really considered Christmas...

(H) We finally decided April.

(W) You finally decided April, I was still rooting for August. I just knew he was going to ROTC camp and I just knew I was going to be an early widow if I got married the summer before he was sent off to the army. We did, we ended up getting married in April. I think we could have had a longer courtship.

(H) Yea, A few more months would have been nice, but once the decision was made and we were working toward it I'm glad we didn't wait.

What could the extra months have given you, more time to see different aspects of each other?

(W) Exactly, I think we were fortunate in that I think that my family was living right there so he saw me interact with all my brothers and sister's and my mother and what not. I remember that I went home with Mike at Thanksgiving time and that's the first time I really saw him interacting with his family members. I think you learn an awful lot about a person when you see how they treat their brothers and sisters and their mother. I remember thinking that I learned more about Mike in that weekend almost than before and it all confirmed all of the positive feelings I had, but at the same time it could have been a very negative experience too. Here you are engaged and all of a sudden saying, I don't even know this person. So I think it is just a matter of learning more about them and really what kind of person you are.

(H) You know what I think is important about seeing a person interact with their family or those that they have spent a good deal of their life with, I think it gives you a general idea of what they might start treating you like after you become familiar to them after several years. You can't fake it for too long...

How did your parents feel about the marriage and about your fiance?

(H) My family was all very well approving. My dad had already passed away so he wasn't there, it was my mom and my brother and two sisters and they had a bunch of cousins at BYU and Las Vegas and all of them that met her just felt like the first time they met her she fit right into the family. We have a fairly close family. I knew all of my cousins growing up and we did things as a family, every summer the family reunion type atmosphere and that thing and so we all tended to look towards permanent relationships when we got married. With our mom and dad and uncles and aunts the thing to do was to go to the temple and to be happy and to continue this happy we had and just enlarge the circle. Everybody just felt like she fit right in.

(W) My family... My mother loved Mike right from the start. In fact, I had one other married sister and her husband had a love for ice cream just about as much as Mike does and I knew Mike was accepted when she'd go to the BYU dairy and ask what flavor Mike would like to have in the freezer. But my mom just really like Mike right from the start and all my family members did. They thought this

How about friends, were your friends all supportive or was there anybody that tried to talk you out of it and say she's not right or he's not right.

(W) No, not in that case,

(H) I don't recall. I remember one of the friends that lived in the same place I did, we called it the Log Cabin, it was a house that looked like a log cabin outside, he was very impressed with Gertrude. He figured if I ever decided it wasn't the right thing he would probably step in, but is was all in a friendly sort of way.

(W) My family, all my brothers and sisters are close in age so we were all students at BYU together so they teased us unmercifully and what not, but that was probably the hardest persecution that we had to endure.

Then that first part of marriage, you were married in April and moved into an apartment I guess?

(W) Well, we moved into an apartment for about for weeks and he went off to Airborne school in Georgia and then to Washington and we were separated for the summer and I moved back home.

Oh, so you did go to the Air Force?

(H) Yes, Yes I did. I still don't know how that happened... If I would have known what I was getting into before I went it might have changed my mind.

(W) So we were basically separated....

(H) It was tough, it was really tough being married for four weeks then leaving. That was very difficult and probably one of the hardest goodbyes I had ever said. I guess the bitter and sweet thing, it made it very enjoyable to get back together again and something to look forward to.

Were there any real shocks or surprises about married life that first year or whatever, do you remember being very surprised or shocked about anything in the married life?

(W) Gosh, I can't think, gosh it has been so long.

(H) There is always the discovery part of the sexual aspect but I don't know if it was a big shock or surprise, it was just a new part of life that you hadn't been aware of before. It was more of a discovery, I wouldn't call it shock.

(W) We were so similar about so many things, I mean we thought the same way about money pretty much, so we didn't have any things about that. Things went just as we had expected. It really was a very good year for us. I was working full-time then because he had a year left to finish. That was different, that was hard being... Because I was working full-time and my nights were free but he still had to study and everything. But my family was very close so we spent a lot of time with my family.

(H) Yea you did. Gretchen or one of them would come down quite often.

Was that okay with you or did you ever fell a little jealous?

(H) No, I was really happy that her family was there. It was kid of... I never felt the ostracizing of the in-laws or anything like that. I was very much accepted and I was glad that they were there and that whenever Gertrude needed to she could run over and that was nice to have that support mechanism.

Then you graduated the next April?

(H) Yes April of 80 and I was commissioned..

(W) Now that starts to get into our...

(H) That's where the shocks began I guess... Probably not so much married life as the military.

(W) As to finally being a family on our own...

(H) Yea being away form school and ...

(W) And family and everything that was familiar and dear to us.

(H) Yea, we drove out here, in fact, this is where we started at Fort Bong. In the summer of 1980 we drove in here late at night, caught the last fairy across the James River, and tried to find a Motel that wasn't going to take all of the money we had because we didn't know how long we were going to be there. I didn't know what to expect, you know my first day in the army even though I had been briefed by the people in ROTC. You know it is just like anything else you do for the first time, even though everyone has told you what to do and what to expect and be careful about this.

(W) I remember that feeling of we do not know anyone. It was pretty lonely and it was just you and I.

Was there a pregnancy soon or...?

(W) No, well I guess that was just kind of a shock for the first year that I just didn't get pregnant and I just couldn't get pregnant. It wasn't until later in Germany that we had infertility problems that had to be remedied before we were able to have children. During that whole first year. I don't remember now dwelling on it so much, I'm sure we dwelled on it then. We expected to get pregnant right away and start our family but I didn't.

(H) You know going to church and you're the only childless couple type thing....

(W) At BYU trying to get pregnant, that is a very hard situation to be in. People ask questions and say things that are... They're not trying to be unkind but they really are.

Then you were here at Bong for how long?

(H) We were here for about four or five months, I was at the basic course. Then I had orders for Germany so we did the basic course and went to Germany for three years.

Where were you there?

(H) We were in Heidelberg, very beautiful. We enjoyed the time there as far as being in Germany and the members and the friends and the location. I had three different jobs while I was there. A couple of them I enjoyed and the one in the middle I didn't really particularly care for. Not so much the job but the people I was working under and not really my immediate boss but the folks up above him made it kind of difficult. We enjoyed our time over there, then we came back here and we've been here about three and a half years now.

Oh, so you moved from Bong to Germany and then back to Bong?

(H) Back to Bong.

Will you be rotating again?

(W) Hopefully, we're ready for a change...

(H) Probably next spring is when they would be ready to move us out. I'm instructing here at the school now and they don't jerk instructors too fast. Some they do though... Then the other thing is with all the budget cuts they've come out with a forty-eight month policy of moving people. Unless it is to their advantage or they have a good reason for doing it, they aren't as quick to move people now.

That is one of the thing s we're studying at the Army Institute of research, what influence this new deal is having on people, and some of it hasn't looked so good because it cuts some people off who had already planned their move and all of a sudden they are told they are staying. That has been really tough on some families according to the research we've done. I think eventually it sounds good on paper....

(W) Eventually it is, but once you're in a mindset of three years and when, like you said, all of a sudden you are learning that you are going to be here a year longer than what you thought... But I think most families... It is somewhat more advantageous with buying a home and with kids in school and that kid of thing that the four year block seems better.

Normally, I have six pieces of pages with my interview questions on, and I just looked in my briefcase as I was getting out of the car and they weren't in there so I will see if I can remember if there is anything else I want to ask you about during the early part... I don't think so. When you did have children was that a turning point or kind of a transition point for you?

(W) Definitely, It was five years of marriage before we had Gary. As I look back on it, we really enjoyed those five years. It was very hard going through those five years wondering whether or not you were ever going to be able to have children, but then having the question answer yes you are going to have children. Yet, looking back on it that five years was predictability of each other. I really knew what to expect of him and he knew what to expect of me. We had that time in Germany away from our families were we really solidified as a family unit; he and I together as a very cohesive unit. So then when children came along it was just wonderful, it was a nice addition. By the same token, it had been that much longer that it had been just the two of us and then having this third party in there... The schedule it really took an bold loop to the schedule, it really did.

(H) I'm glad we had the time together.

(W) So you know that's my hard thing any more, I know that the church counsels to start the family right away and everything, but it was so positive for us... I certainly wouldn't recommend five years, but it was so positive for us to have some time together to learn who each of us are and everything because you change an awful lot during the pregnancy. It causes a lot of

stress on the relationship in some ways and I just think that early on it would have been more difficult.

(H) Yea, I had to learn to deal with the hormonal , emotional... The first few times it really scared me because I didn't know what was coming off. I thought well what did I do wrong this time. I still wonder that sometimes but.

Yea, that is an issue and it it difficult for you too. I know with my wife she doesn't understand why it is happening so that makes it doubly difficult. As you look back over the eight years how would you say your marriage has changed from what it started out to be to where you are now?

(W) Gosh I look back... Boy we're a blase couple aren't we.

(H) Well, I think there is a little more companionship. Well, I know that when I was a was first married I'd always been a very individual type person, not a social buff by any means. I like to have a lot of time to myself and I guess that was really hard and in some ways I still haven't totally gotten over that. The idea that you have to plan things together and work things together, and it is not always a matter of, "Here's all the stuff that's got to be done, let's split it down the middle, you take that half and I'll take that. That's not the way it works, it's a coordinating working... You know the jigsaw type of thing, you put that piece I'll put this piece and so forth. I guess that was one of the things that has changed, I feel like I am a little better at that. When I think about something, sometimes I forget still, but I am a little better about it. I think , okay, if I do this or if I schedule this or if I plan to do such and such how is that going to effect what she is doing and the kids and so forth.

(W) Yea and I guess you know that in the beginning you are so established in the roles of who's going to take care of this and who is going to take care of that. Eight years down the road you pretty much know... he assumes this is his responsibility to get this taken care of and these are the things I see as my responsibility to make sure of taking care of them and we don't have to coordinate them as finally as we did when we were first married. The arguments and disagree.... well not argue, he doesn't like those words, but the disagreements you have take on a different tone. I mean the flamboyant emotional self-pity hurt type of things, you tend to get rid of those and you realize that you don't want to hurt this person anymore. You realize we have had this disagreement and this is what we need to do to resolve it.

If you had to choose two or three things that give your marriage or cause your marriage to be a strong marriage, what would you say those things were?

(H) I would say one thing is having had time early in the marriage away from family. In other words away from her family, my family, us together where we had to sink or swim together out in the world. I think that... I can see some advantages close by during the early years. That first year in college it was nice, but I think, like Gertrude said earlier, that is one thing that made us learn to work together, it was us. We were out there alone in the world.

(W) I think a good sexual relationship is an important thing. Because it seems like whenever there have been harder times... It seems like we have been always able to enjoy that part of our relationship although other things, they

do cause a damper on it, it seems like if ever we are going to get out of that damper and things, we can go back to our sexual relationship an build that up again or whatever. It (the sexual part) seems to smooth over a lot. Don't you think?

(H) Yea

(W) Of course communication. If you can't talk and feel like you can express exactly what you are feeling. I feel Mike is a good listener. What you're feeling and also feeling that the other person in truly understanding.

(H) Sometimes that part hasn't always been easy though. I know there are times that either I feel that there is something wrong but I don't know what but she isn't always willing to talk about right away. She has to wait until she is ready to talk about it...

(W) He is supposed to know, he is supposed to be able to feel...

(H) And sometimes I have to draw it out of her, and that wasn't always successful so that's a part that... As far as the listening part, I might hear what she says but I don't know how successful I have been at actually trying to resolve the situation all the time. I know that she has trained me to do a few things so I have to take credit that I have made a couple of changes in my wife since running into her. Probably not all the ones she would like to have implemented by now.

Now I would like you to end up this couple part of the interview by telling my students... If you were sitting in front of my classroom of students who were getting married, and they said, "What piece of advice would you give us?" What would you say?

(H) About marriage in general or making decision or...

What do they need to know to be successful in their marriage?

(H) I would think number one, make sure it is the right decision. When I way the right decision I mean make sure you feel good about who you are getting married to and that you are honest with yourself. I think that too many people in the world are not honest with themselves, they do things for other reasons because other people want it or because they feel pressured or whatever. If they are honest with themselves and they say that I really feel right about this person, that they're the person I should marry and we will be able to get along. That is number one, I good decision, and of course prayer and a lot of other things go into that. Then number 2, during the relationship, communication frequently and in little bits, don't well I'm going to save this all up and then after two weeks, "boom". If something starts to build and/or you feel like something is getting on your nerves let's sit and talk about it instead of letting it build. So communicating frequently and then again openly and being honest with yourself and with the other person.

(W) I think the important thing to is just making the initial decision the right person. Finding out, talk about everything you can under the sun, everything. Don't assume because of being a member of the church that you feel the same way about things, that you really value the same things, don't make any assumptions. Talk, and talk, and talk, and test each other and throw out questions and cover every possible aspect of philosophy or management,

finances, or how you just feel about everything. Then don't always assume that the thing that you think might be insignificant in the relationship initially will be insignificant later on. Sometimes those things are the very things that irritate you the very most. I always though... Mike was always a little tardy and punctuality was always... I am very keen on punctuality and I thought well that's really not any big of a deal but it has been kind of a place of contention of us and we have had to work at it a lot. You know, I need to relax a little more and he certainly has speed up a lot. So sometimes the things that you think are very insignificant sometimes can be significant and just don't overlook those kinds of things. Then I think that similar backgrounds are very important; where they have come from, what they have done, where they expect to go in life. I think you have some really, some common, basis in all of that and then, like I said, I think the decision is the most important thing; and then after that realizing that you are not home free. That each and everyday you need to work at it and that you need to keep as much spark in your relationship as when you were dating.

This is one of the questions that I should have asked earlier, but what you said sparked my memory: Did you at some point feel that you had a spiritual confirmation that Mike was the right one?

(W) Yes very much so. There were a couple of days that we fasted together and then lots of time during your thought and prayer and those kind of things and then finally at the conclusions of one fast we knelt down together we felt that it was the right thing to do. Yes, I think we both did and I think that Mike received his spiritual confirmation before he ever asked me.

Has that been a source of strength for you do you think?

(W) Yea I think so. One of the very significant things occurred was in my stake president temple recommend interview, it was President Conker, and he gave some very wise counsel. He talked about how, with the temple and the eternity marriage, it is a three-way commitment and that... He said that even if things could be wrong in the beginning because you had made that commitment with the Lord if you two are willing to work at it, it can be made right. I thought, you know that is a very strong promise. From that temple recommend interview on, I never did question or doubt. It resolved every little bit of doubt I had in my mind. I still remember that, that was a very special recommend interview. I'm sure he doesn't remember it but I sure do.