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ABSTRACT

IMPROVING MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG COUPLES IN
THE OTTAWA SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

Floyd Samuel Spence

Adviser:

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: IMPROVING MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG COUPLES IN THE
OTTAWA SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Name of Researcher: Floyd Samuel Spence

Name and degree of faculty chair:

Date completed: July 2011

Problem

A number of marital issues are challenging the members of the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church. Of primary concern is the increase in "marital distress." Given the importance of marital satisfaction on the health of a marriage, an examination of marital satisfaction levels among couples in the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church is a priority. Based on this background, the primary focus of this study was to investigate marital satisfaction and its effect on marital health, with the intention of improving marital satisfaction levels among couples in the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Method

This study evaluated marital satisfaction factors that were important to couples in the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church. I reached the population for this study through personal contact as well as by distributing flyers that described the nature of the project.

Each of the twelve couples who consented to participate in the study, was given two "Marital Satisfaction Inventory Revised" (MSI-R) questionnaires. Twelve men and twelve women who had been married for at least two years and whose ages were between 20 and 75 completed a total of twenty-four questionnaires. All twenty-four (100%) questionnaires were returned and were used to assess the participants' level of marital satisfaction.

Results

Of the twelve couples that were surveyed, only one couple was satisfied with their marriage. In other words, only one couple described their relationship as satisfying and viewed their partner as good friends. In addition, only one couple viewed their relationship as a major source of gratification, while eleven couples expressed relationship dissatisfaction with significant levels of relationship conflicts being present within the marriage.

Compared to the dissatisfied couples, the satisfied couple tended to have a higher level of expression of affection towards each other, resolved their differences when they occurred and were viewed as good parents by their spouse.

Conclusions

In summary, the seven major factors that appeared to be areas of concern regarding marital satisfaction for couples of the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist church were Affective Communication—an expression of affection and understanding between couples; Problem Solving Communication—a need for more effective skills in resolving differences; Aggression—a need for appropriate skills in reducing the level of intimidation or physical aggression; Time Together—a need to improve the level of “friendship” reflected in behavioral intimacy; Disagreement About Finances—a need for better money management skills so as to reduce the level of relationship discord regarding finance; Sexual Dissatisfaction—the need for an improvement in the frequency and quality of intercourse and other sexual activities; and Dissatisfaction With Children—the need for parenting skills in improving parent-child relationships, as well as in tackling child-rearing demands that are having a negative impact on the marriage.

These findings, therefore, indicate the need for an urgent response since these marital issues have the potential of impacting negatively, not only the couples, but also their children and their children’s children. Consequently, family life professionals are of significant importance to the Seventh-day Adventist Church community in providing the necessary educational interventions that are required to address these marital issues.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

IMPROVING MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG COUPLES IN
THE OTTAWA SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

A Project Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by

Floyd Samuel Spence

June 2011

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This study is dedicated to my wife, Lisa G. Spence, who has been a wonderful source of support and encouragement; to my daughter Akilah and my son Jadon, both of whom experienced a loss in time spent with me during my pre-occupation with my doctoral studies; to my parents Theophilus and Alma Spence (now deceased) who raised me to my advisors Drs Jeff Brown and Rene Drumm, who have so carefully directed my dissertation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose of the Project (Study)	2
Organization of the Project (Study)	3
Definition of Terms.....	3
Limitations of the Project.....	6
Methodology	6
Participants and Sample Selection	6
2. A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON SOME OF THE MAJOR CONTRIBUTING FACTORS OF MARITAL SATISFACTION.....	9
Introduction.....	9
The Institution of the Marriage Relationship (Gen 2:18-25).....	9
Relationship Building a Viable Way of Improving Marital Satisfaction (Eph 5:21-33)	14
Sexual Intimacy and Marital Health (1 Cor 7:3; Song 4)	21
Summary	26
3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	28
Literature Contributing Understanding to Marital Satisfaction	28
Introduction.....	28
Marital Distress and Its Implication on Marital, Mental and Marital Health	29
Mental and Physical Health	30
Factors that are Identified as Relating to Marital Satisfaction.....	31
Communication in Marriage	32
The Issue	32
The Solution.....	34
Power Struggles in Marriage: We-ness vs Separateness	36
The Issue	36
The Solution.....	37

Problem Solving in Marriage.....	39
The Issue	39
The Solution.....	41
Sexual Intimacy in Marriage.....	48
The Issue	48
The Solution.....	50
Managing Finances in Marriage	55
The Issue	55
The Solution.....	57
Parenting Issues in Marriage.....	58
The Issue	58
The Solution.....	60
Summary	61
 4. ANALYSES OF MARITAL ISSUES WITHIN THE OTTAWA SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH	 63
Introduction.....	63
Sample.....	63
The Instrument	64
The Major Issues Affecting Marriages Within the Ottawa Church	66
Interpretation and Discussion	76
The Level of Marital Satisfaction Among Couples Within the Ottawa Church	79
Marital Needs Among Couples in the Ottawa Church	82
Strategy for Improving Marital Satisfaction Among the Couples of the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church	83
Seminar Objectives	88
Assessment of Desired Outcome	88
Assessment Instrument	89
Seminar Format.....	91
Resources That were Required	91
Key Players That Helped	92
How Target Audience was Recruited to Participate or Attend.....	92
Time/Event Sequence	92
Post-seminar Assessment Results	93
Summary	93
 5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	 95
Introduction.....	95
Summary	95
Purpose.....	95
Theological Reflection.....	95

Overview of Related Literature	98
Sampling	102
Instrumentation	103
Discussion of Findings.....	104
Affective Communication (AFC)	104
Problem-Solving Communication (PSC).....	104
Aggression (AGG)	105
Time Together (TTO)	105
Disagreement About Finances (FIN).....	106
Sexual Dissatisfaction (SEX).....	106
Dissatisfaction with Children (DSC)	107
Global Distress (GDS).....	107
Conclusions.....	108
Implications.....	108
Recommendations.....	110
Appendix	
A. CORRESPONDENCE.....	113
B. INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR SURVEY PARTICIPATION.....	118
C. SAMPLE SURVEY QUESTIONS	112
D. THE ART & SCIENCE OF LOVE SEMINAR TOPICS	122
E. MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT EVALUATION FORM.....	124
REFERENCE LIST	126
VITAE.....	137

LIST OF TABLES

1. Number of Respondents—Ages 20 to 75 Years	67
2. Ethnicity of Respondents—Ages 20 to 75 Years	67
3. Questionnaires Returned	67
4. Respondents with/without Children.....	68
5. Male versus Female Level of Global Distress	70
6. Couples' Level of Global Distress.....	79

LIST OF FIGURES

1. MSI-R Profile - Females.....	70
2. MSI-R Profile - Males	71
3. MSI-R Profile: Major Areas of Couples' Dissatisfaction.....	79
4. Male versus Female Level of Global Distress	80
5. Male versus Female Level of Satisfaction	80
6. Couples' Level of Global Distress.....	82
7. Parallel between the Seven Factors and the Seminar Topics.....	86
8. Marital Satisfaction Seminar Evaluation Form.....	90
9. Schedule.....	91

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Among the many problems frequently encountered, there are a few that are as pervasive in their impact as marital distress (Lebow, 2005, p.38) which has a strong relationship with the psychological well-being of a husband and wife (Whisman, 1999; Snyder & Whisman, 2003, p.7; Robles & Kiecolt-Glaser, 2003), as well as with the demise of a marriage (Gottman & Levenson, 2002; Gottman, & Silver, 1994, p. 29; Lebow, 2005, p.38). Having a satisfying marriage, therefore, is associated with greater happiness and life satisfaction with lower risks of health-related issues (Robles & Kiecolt-Glaser, 2003, p. 409).

With most Canadians still wanting to be husbands, wives, and parents (Crompton, 2005, p. 2) and with most Americans viewing marriage as the “highest expression of commitment they can imagine” (Coontz, 2007, p.14), marital satisfaction has been a major area of study for researchers, in an attempt to determine the major factors that contribute to marital satisfaction (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Whisman, 1999). Research (Gurman & Fraenkel, 2002) has discovered that the major factors that contribute to marital satisfaction are effective communication (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005, p. 409-410; Stanly et al., 2002, p. 660); a sense of “we-ness” between husband and wife” (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 190; Simmons, Gordon, & Chambless, 2005, pp. 934-935); the couples’ ability to resolve conflicts between one another (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p.129; Gottman

& Declaire, 2001, p. 209; Simmons et al., 2005, p. 935); the level of satisfaction with one's sexual relationship (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p.200; Larson, 2003, p. 147; Litzinger & Gordon, 2005 p. 412); the level of agreement by a husband and wife in managing their finances (Dakin & Wampler, 2008, pp. 301-302; Gottman & Silver, 1999, pp.197-198); and effective balancing of marriage and parenting (Larson, 2003, p. 122; Gottman & Silver, 1999, pp. 213-216).

Purpose of the Project (Study)

According to the Canadian Department of Justice Child Support Initiative (2008), "a couple marrying today has a 40 percent chance of divorcing and that slightly more than half of those divorces will involve children" (p. 1). In addition, the divorce rate in 2003 in the Province of Ontario increased by 5.1 per cent over the previous year (Statistics Canada, March, 2005). This statistical phenomenon has been evident within the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist church. Although the divorce rate is not on a large scale, a number of marital issues are challenging the married couples of the Church with the increase in "marital distress" being of primary concern. Though divorce is one way of dealing with this problem, another option needs to be pursued in order to repair these relationships, since divorce has adverse effects on the family, especially on children (Sobolewski, J.M. & Amato, P.R., 2007; Marjoribanks, K., 2005; Strohschein, L., 2005).

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to identify factors that contribute to marital satisfaction for the married couples of the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church. The study also investigated differences between the levels of marital satisfaction of husbands and wives in each marriage and consequently, utilized a psycho-educational

program as an intervention method to address the issue of marital satisfaction among couples in the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Organization of the Project (Study)

This study contains five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the research topic, indicates the purpose and significance of the study, and provides the organizational framework, definition of terms, limitations, and methodology of the study.

Chapter 2 contains a theological reflection on some of the major contributing factors of marital satisfaction and includes the institution of the marriage relationship and its implication for marital satisfaction, relationship-building as a viable way of improving marital satisfaction, and sexual intimacy and its impact on marital health.

Chapter 3 contains a review of the literature related to some of the major contributing factors of marital satisfaction.

Chapter 4 describes the demographic data, the analyses of the data, the summary of the results of the data analyses and a strategy for improving marital satisfaction among the couples of the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Chapter 5 summarizes the study, presents the findings, draws conclusions, and makes recommendations for future research.

Definition of Terms

The following words are defined as used in the research study:

Active listening: A communication technique that employs the use of emphatic comments, asking appropriate questions, restatements, paraphrasing, and summarizing for the purpose of verification.

Child-centered marriage: A marriage where one or both partners focus more on parenting their children than on each other.

Conflict: Any disagreement or difference of opinion, including stressful and hostile interactions between spouses.

Couple: A male and a female who have been joined together through marriage.

Cyber-betrayal: Online cheating or having an affair online.

Desire: Anticipation and feeling that you deserve sexual pleasure, arousal, as well as being receptive and responsive to touching and genital stimulation.

Differentiation: The process by which an individual becomes more uniquely himself/herself by remaining in a relationship with those he/she loves.

Disconnection: The lack or absence of closeness in a marriage.

Infantile desires: An expression of long-forgotten, infantile, instinctual wishes.

Internet Infidelity: Taking the sexual energy (via the internet) of any sort – thoughts, feelings, and behaviors – outside of a committed relationship in such a way that it damages the relationship and then, pretending that this drain in energy will affect neither partner nor the relationship as long as it remains undiscovered.

Intimacy: The feeling of closeness and connection with a spouse.

Low sexual desire: An absence or diminished level of sexual interest.

Marriage: The union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

Marital dissatisfaction: The subjective evaluation of one's experience in his/her marriage. Individuals are usually dissatisfied when their needs are not being met and when the individual's expectations and desires are not being satisfied.

Marital distress: One or both partners in a marital relationship experience a high level of dissatisfaction and distress accompanying that state.

Marital health: The level of well-being within a marriage.

Marital satisfaction: The subjective evaluation of one's experience in his/her marriage. Individuals are usually satisfied when their needs are being met and when the individual's expectations and desires are being satisfied.

Mental Health: A state of emotional and psychological well-being in which an individual is able to use his or her cognitive and emotional capabilities, function in society, and meet the ordinary demands of everyday life.

Perpetual problems: Conflicts based on personality differences or preferences in lifestyle that never go away.

Sensate-focus: An activity where you and your partner take turns focusing on one another's own physical sensations while being touched.

Separateness: A lack of togetherness in a relationship.

Sexuality: The way in which a spouse becomes attracted to the other as they experience the erotic and express themselves as sexual beings.

Sexual dysfunction: A difficulty experienced by an individual or a couple during any stage of normal sexual activity, including desire, arousal, or orgasm.

Sexual intimacy: Closeness that is derived from any form of sensual expression, including sexual intercourse.

"Squeeze" and "start-up" technique: An activity where one's partner, in the midst of sexual activity, stops to give his organ a squeeze so as to delay ejaculation.

Quantum Model: A process in which the complex aspects of human sexuality, such as one's health, physical stimulation, intimacy, desire, eroticism, passion, and love, all fit together to make one's genitals work and reach orgasm.

We-ness: A sense of partnership and of being on the same team.

Limitations of the Project

This study cannot be generalized beyond the types of couples similar to those who participated in the study. The respondent group was a predominantly black, educated, upper middle class group, not representative of the population at large. Sixty-six percent of the respondents indicated that they were dissatisfied and thirty-four percent were satisfied with their marriage. In addition, ninety-one percent of all the couples were not satisfied with their relationship while nine percent were satisfied. Since the purpose of this study was to examine factors related to marital satisfaction, studying the level of marital satisfaction of couples from the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church community was appropriate, but the non-representative sample limits the advisability of generalizing the results.

Methodology

This was an exploratory study in which marital satisfaction factors for husband and wives of the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church were identified and investigated. Twelve couples were recruited for the study and consequently completed a total of twenty-four questionnaires that were used to evaluate factors of marital satisfaction.

Participants and Sample Selection

I recruited the participants from the Ottawa Church population through personal

contact as well as by distributing flyers that described the nature of the project. The twelve couples who volunteered to participate in the study received an explanation of the voluntary nature of this study and an introductory letter (refer to appendix B) that was attached to each survey form (refer to appendix C) to inform husbands and wives about the study and to give instructions for responding to the survey. A participant information statement was included which assured respondents that their identity would be kept confidential.

Each couple was given two copies of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory, Revised (MSI-R) questionnaire and three envelopes. Wives and husbands were then asked to individually complete one of the questionnaires without communicating with their spouse. Upon completion, each individual was asked to place his/her completed questionnaire in one of the three envelopes provided. Both sealed envelopes were then placed in the third envelope, which was then sealed and placed in a drop off box in the church's foyer.

The questionnaire solicited information using (a) ten demographic questions (gender, age, educational level, occupation, ethnicity, duration of current marriage, number of previous marriages or significant relationships, number of children, age of oldest and youngest child); (b) twenty items to assess consistency in responding to item content; (c) ten items to assess tendencies to distort the appraisal of their relationship in a socially desirable direction; (d) twenty-two items to measure overall dissatisfaction with their relationship; (e) thirteen items to measure dissatisfaction with the amount of affection and understanding expressed by their partner; (f) nineteen items to measure general ineffectiveness in resolving difference; (g) nineteen items to measure the level of

intimidation and physical aggression experienced from the partner; (h) ten items that evaluates companionship as expressed in time shared in leisure activities; (i) ten items to measure relationship-discord regarding the management of finances; (j) eleven items to assess dissatisfaction with the frequency and quality of intercourse and other sexual activity; (k) twelve items to evaluate the respondent's advocacy for a traditional versus nontraditional orientation toward marital and parental gender role; (l) nine items to assess the level of disruption of relationships within the respondent's family of origin; (m) eleven items to assess the quality of the relationship between respondents and their children as well as parental concern regarding the emotional and behavioral well-being of one or more of the children; and (n) ten items to assess the extent of conflict between partners regarding child-rearing practices.

In terms of data analysis, the data collected was manually scored based on those thirteen items that the survey was geared toward testing. The analysis consequently looked at the themes that emerged from the data. Once the analysis was done, the next step was to design a plan of intervention to speak to the various issues that the analysis revealed.

CHAPTER 2

A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON SOME OF THE MAJOR CONTRIBUTING FACTORS OF MARITAL SATISFACTION

Introduction

Every civilized society regards marriage as a sacred and honorable institution (Smith & Smith, 2002, p. 5), with the well-being of married individuals being enhanced through the support they receive from such a union. The account of creating the first couple (Gen 2: 18-24) provides the framework within which happy, healthy, and satisfied relationships evolve. According to Smalley (2004), “life is relationships; the rest is just details. God made you for relationships” (p. 37). It is for this reason that this chapter addresses some of the major contributing factors of marital satisfaction within a biblical context.

This theological reflection will center on three biblical themes: first, the institution of the marriage relationship and its implication for marital satisfaction (Gen 2:18-25); second, relationship-building as a viable way of improving marital satisfaction (Eph 5:31); and third, sexual intimacy and its impact on marital health (1 Cor 7:3).

The Institution of the Marriage Relationship (Gen 2:18-25)

The genesis of the marriage institution can be traced back to the creation of the world, when God made the first male and the first female and joined them together as

husband and wife. The Genesis account of creation indicates that once God had created the man (Gen. 2: 7) and had given him dominion over all the earth (Gen. 2:15), He observed that it was not good for the man to be alone and proceeded to make a helper suitable for him (Gen. 2: 18). According to Exell and Leale (1892) “the wide circle of his empire did not contain one with whom he could reciprocate affection—with whom he could in all points sympathize. To supply this blank a new creation had to take place—a fairer form was to enrich the earth than any which it yet contained” (p. 54). God therefore took the initiative out of a heart of love and provided the man with a companion, thus completing the act of creating humankind “male and female” (Gen 1:27).

In providing Adam with a companion, God “. . . caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man” (Gen 2:21-22 NIV). Achtemeier (1976) suggests that, “the fact that the woman is created from the rib of the man is most significant for the author of Gen. ch. 2. The man and the woman were originally one flesh, and after the creation of the woman they long to become one again” (p. 71). In other words, the joining of Adam and Eve was a reunion of the “one flesh” that was temporarily separated when God took the rib from the man and created woman. This reunion was consequently acknowledged by Adam’s exclamation, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23). It is significant to note, therefore, that the woman was not made from the head of a man to rule over him, nor from his feet to be trampled on by him, but instead, from his side to “be equal with him; under his arm, to be protected; and near his heart to be beloved” (Spence & Exell, 1975, p. 54). According to Leupold (1942), “she is

exactly on the same level with him as far as being a creature of God is concerned" (p. 135).

Furthermore, the act of creating woman out of the frame of man suggests a "moral and social relation of the sexes to each other, the dependence of woman upon man, her close relationship to him and the foundation existing in nature for the feelings with which each should naturally regard the other" (Skinner, 1910, p. 68). The act of God, therefore, in giving the woman to the man, is considered the institution of the marriage relation and consequently, "stamps marriage as a divinely willed and approved state" (Leupold, 1942, p. 135).

When Adam received his wife, he declared: "This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken from man" (Gen 2:23). Embellished in this animated statement made by Adam is the prominence of the most possible intimate kinship that these two beings could share in their relationship. Therefore, this is why a man should leave his father and mother and become one flesh with his wife (Gen 2: 24). Spence & Exell (1975) suggest that this leaving and cleaving on the part of man and the woman is "a forsaking of father and mother—not filially, in respect of duty, but in respect of habitation and comparatively in respect of affection" (p. 52). "Becoming one flesh," therefore, "involves the complete identification of one personality with the other in a community of interests and pursuits, a union consummated in intercourse" (Leupold, 1942, p. 137). "Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate" (Mk 10:9), because marriage is a "joining" while divorce is separating that which God had willed to be life-long between a husband and a wife.

Within modern society, divorce has been making inroads on the family. Its dramatic increase has adverse implications, especially with 50 percent of all first marriages ending in divorce (Cole & Broussard, 2006, p. 6). When divorce occurs, families get broken up, assets get divided, individuals are wounded emotionally, children are affected for life, and society gets thrown out of balance. This is because “God designed marriage as the foundational element of all human society. Before there was (formally speaking) a church, a school, a business instituted, God formally instituted marriage” (Adams, 1980, p. 4). In marriage, therefore, God has given to the human race “the basis and climax of all human fellowship from which all other forms derive and in which they find their primary model” (Bromiley, 1980, p. 4).

When confronted on the subject of divorce by the religious leaders of the day who inquired whether it was “lawful for a man to divorce his wife” (Mk 10:6-9), Jesus directed them to the writings of Moses regarding his position on marriage and divorce. The Pharisees then quoted from Deuteronomy 24:1-4, informing Jesus that “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce” (Mk10:4) when ending the marriage with his wife. Jesus reminded them that it was because of the “hardness of their hearts,” an unwillingness to forgive, that this accommodation was allowed, because in the beginning, it was not so, for God “made them male and female” (Mk 10:6), a statement found in Genesis 1:27. His intent was to remind them “that marriage was meant to be monogamous and life-long. He used Genesis, partly because he wanted to point to the beginning and probably also because this was the standard proof text for monogamy” (Instone-Brewer, 2002, p. 137). In other words, if God does something one way, His example should be followed accordingly.

A closer look at the passage quoted by Jesus in Genesis 1:27, indicates that the marriage should consist of “male and female,” two people, not three or more as in the case of a polygamous relationship. In addition, by also quoting from Gen. 2:24, when He mentioned the concept of “one flesh,” Jesus is combining two proof texts in order to argue His point that marriage should be life-long. According to Genesis 1:27, therefore, the male and female are joined together by God who created them and blessed them and told them to be fruitful and multiply. Consequently Jesus’ statement, “let no man separate” (Mk 10:9), is of tremendous significance since it was not man who joined them in the first place. Instone-Brewer (2002) indicates that the “activity of Genesis 1:27 is much more that of someone who “joins” than someone who “binds.” In verse 27,, God has the role of a parent who finds a spouse for his child and in verse 28, God is like the priest or rabbi who “blesses” them when he joins them at their wedding” (p. 140). It is the couple, therefore, who bind themselves to each other through the vows in a marriage contract. According to Malachi, God is the witness to these vows (Mal 2:14); He wishes that individuals were faithful to them and He gets hurt when these vows are broken.

Divorce is, therefore, alien to the plan of God and should be avoided with “scorn.” Though Moses allowed divorce, according to Jesus, marriages can be rescued from falling into divorce, if both persons are willing to forgive and reconcile their differences instead of being stubborn and selfish. Consequently, even in a case of adultery, divorce is not mandatory (Matt 19:8).

The question raised by the Pharisee in Matthew 19:7 suggests that Moses had “commanded” divorce in the case of adultery; however Jesus said that divorce was not commanded but allowed by Moses. This further suggests that the innocent partner could

forgive the infidelity of the guilty one rather than opting for divorce. Jesus' teaching implies, however, that the divorce law should only be used if the guilty partner stubbornly refuses to repent and give up the adulterous behavior.

Since God is the Creator of the marriage institution, it is very pivotal for Him to be acknowledged as the foundation of one's marriage. This includes the fact that He who has instituted marriage is interested in the happiness and well-being of those who enter there-in.

Relationship Building a Viable Way of Improving Marital Satisfaction (Eph 5:21-33)

Focused and deliberate attention should consequently be given to the marriage relationship by those who enter it, with their priority being that of ensuring that the marriage "works." There are many who have gotten married and neglect to nurture their relationships, failing to realize that there is nothing magical within the marriage itself that will enable the relationship to last. Whatever it takes to make marriage last exists within each partner's willingness to give to the relationship whatever it needs. Consequently, similar effort that was invested in the preparation of one's wedding should be given to the marriage throughout its lifespan.

Among the many Scriptures that have been used as a point of instruction for couples on nurturing their relationship as well as in "divorce-proofing" their marriage is that of Ephesians 5:21-33. This passage and its interpretation have generated much debate, especially in verse 22 where wives are commanded to submit themselves to their husbands.

One school of thought is that the author of Ephesians was “a man of his day, shaped by the patriarchal attitudes of Greco-Roman, Jewish cultures toward women” (Reid, 2008, p. 20) and is hence reflecting such cultural norms in his writings. This egalitarian view is further bolstered by the use of 1 Corinthians 14:34-36 where we find the statement, “Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church” (NKJV). Reid (2008) further suggests that these instructions are not original to Paul, since household codes like these have been used since “the time of Aristotle who outlined the proper workings of a Greek home . . . In Colossians and Ephesians the effort being made is to infuse Christian values and motivation into the socio-political structure that functioned in the Greco-Roman world” (p. 22). It is for this reason, therefore, that egalitarianism recommends that one embrace a theology of equality and mutuality (Reid, 2008, p. 22) put forward in Ephesians 5:21 by Paul who also wrote, “Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God” (1 Cor 11:11-12 NKJV) and “The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does” (1 Cor 7:4 NKJV).

Olthuis (1975), however, in alluding to Ephesians 5:23, suggests that in the marriage the husband has the office of head. That simply means he has the responsibility and authority to call the marriage-his wife as well as himself-to obey the norm of truth. If he faithfully exercises his office, both he and his wife will be freed to be themselves. As the head, the husband is called to take the lead in mutually examining the marriage to see if it is developing according to its long-range goals (p. 27).

In light of the interpretation of the egalitarians of Ephesians 5:21-23, therefore, Martin (as cited in Brown, 1992) suggests that Paul was struggling with at least three movements: "The sense of being called to the new order of life in Christ that strongly implies a life of equality; the practical problems of each local church e.g. Corinth, a city of extremes which also nurtured extremes in Christian lifestyles and the deeply engrained cultural dynamics that existed in himself as well as in the communities he was addressing" (p. 35). Consequently, the passage has "preserved the traditional view of the male as the head of the family, but that headship is a function only, not a matter of status or superiority" (Achte-meier, 1976, p. 86). In concurring with Achtemeier, Olthuis (1975) states that

headship has nothing to do with being boss. The husband can only command the wife to live up to what the two of them mutually pledged when they were married. Likewise, if the husband neglects his office, the wife ought to call the husband back to their mutual vows. . . . Headship does not mean that the husband leads or decides in every detail. Once a man and woman have decided which vision of life is going to be the norm in their activities in their marriage, they can leave the decisions in day-to-day affairs to the partner with the appropriate talents, temperaments and situations. The husband's role is to be on guard continually so that the "little" things do not develop into the kinds of patterns that undermine the entire marriage (p. 27).

Since egalitarianism tends to stress a partner's individual rights to the point of disregarding that of his/her spouse, it is important to note that God's ideal is much more than the equality of a husband and wife and more of focusing on sharing life together at every level (Brown, 1992, p. 75). Hence, in approaching marriage within the context of Ephesians 5, one "cannot subscribe to any superior-subordinate or master-servant relationship as a model" (Brown, 1992, p. 36).

Contrary to the egalitarian view of mutual submission is the view that calls on husbands to "love" their wives and wives to "respect" their husbands (Eph 5:33).

According to Eggerichs (2004), a major proponent of this “love, respect” concept, “when a husband feels disrespected, he has a natural tendency to react in ways that feel unloving to his wife. When a wife feels unloved, she has a natural tendency to react in ways that feel disrespectful to her husband” (p. 16). The idea is that this love and respect connection is a key factor in the existence of a healthy marriage, as well as the key to any problem that any marriage may encounter.

Furthermore, the love that the man should have for his wife is an unconditional love as is suggested by the word “agape” which Paul uses in the command. Hence, he is to take “Christ’s love for the church as the pattern of his own attitude to his wife” (Wedel, 1953, p. 721). This command, therefore, is for a man to love his wife with “the sacrificial love of Christ” (Campbell, 2003, p. 250), a love that is not harsh, will not self-assert, but one that is governed by self-sacrifice. In addition, Nichols (1980) suggests that “His love will find expressions in a variety of ways. It will be given in words of understanding and affection. The husband will properly provide for the wife’s temporal support (1 Tim 5:8); he will do everything possible to assure her happiness (1 Cor 7:33)” (p. 1036). Consequently, if a man is commanded by the Author of marriage to love his wife, she must certainly need it.

In like manner, the respect given by the wife is also to be given unconditionally. If individuals within marriages are to understand this love-respect connection, they first need to realize that they both communicate in codes. This communicating-in-code is not negative, but simply an illustration of the differences that exist between a man and a woman, for at creation, God created them male and female (Matt 19:4). The underlining fact here is that men and women are very different. For example, when a woman says, “I

have nothing to wear,” she means she has nothing new. On the other hand, when a man says, “I have nothing to wear,” he means he has nothing clean. Consequently, if each partner does not understand this difference in each other, it can result in an escalation of marital conflict, due to the inability to interpret and understand what the other person is trying to communicate.

In addition, Eggerichs (2004) has drawn attention to a study by professor of psychology, Dr. John Gottman, to support the view that love and respect are the foundation of a successful marriage (p. 35). A study of long-term marriages by Gottman and his research team recruited couples from a wide range of backgrounds who had been married twenty to forty years to the same partner. The study showed that despite the wide differences in occupations and backgrounds of these individuals, there existed a remarkable similarity in the tone of their conversations. As these couples communicated with each other, there was almost always what Gottman and Silver (1994) refers to as “a strong undercurrent of two basic ingredients: love and respect. These are the direct opposite of-and antidote for-contempt perhaps the most corrosive force in marriage” (pp. 61-62).

However, Gottman’s scientific finding, which has been used to bolster this “love and respect” view within marriage, did not identify the male’s deepest value as being respect and the female’s as being love. On the contrary, what the research shows is that “partners who show each other love and respect also ensure that the positive-to-negative ratio of a marriage will be heavily tilted to the positive side” (Gottman & Silver, 1994, p. 62).

In spite of the arguments put forth by both the egalitarians, as well as by the

proponents of the “love, respect” view, there still seems to be a third view that, if embraced by couples, could enhance their marital satisfaction. According to Eph 5:31, a man ought to “leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.” This passage from Genesis 2:24 connotes

a sexual concourse and psychological concurrence, in the full sense of the conjunction of bodies and minds, at once through eros and agape . . . a psychic as well as physiological gift of loyalty and exchange, the deepest harmonious community that exists between people, which is the unity between husband and wife in all its dimensions, emotionally, physically and spiritual. It indicates a oneness and intimacy in the total relationship of the whole person of the husband to the whole person of the wife, a harmony and union with each other in all things (Davidson, 2007, p. 47).

In other words, marriage involves a union of the whole person, “ordained and sealed by God, preceded by a public leaving of parents, consummated in sexual union, issuing in a permanent mutually supportive partnership and normally crowned by the gift of children” (Campbell, p. 244). It seems obvious, therefore, that for a marital union to remain happy, it must be nurtured with both partners constantly submitting to one another (Eph 5:21). This is because when a husband and wife are both mutually subject to each they are, in essence, being subject towards God (Achteimeier, 1976, p.85).

In addition to have a satisfying marriage, Ephesians 5:31 and Genesis 2:24 suggest that the mindset of “we-ness” in marriage is what keeps couples bonded as opposed to the mindset of “separateness” which has the potential of adding to the divorce statistics. Current scientific research has found that individuals in marriage who “perceive themselves as a couple also report being more satisfied with their relationship than do those who primarily perceive themselves as individuals” (Seider, Hirschberger, Nelson, & Levenson, 2009, p. 605). This scenario can be referred to as the “we-ness” versus “separateness” concept of marriage. Anything contrary to this would appear to contradict

the Scripture's view of "one flesh" articulated in Genesis 2.

According to Davidson (2007), the question of hierarchy in marriage, be it an ontological or functional one between the sexes, is not founded on Scripture.

Furthermore, the argument of hierarchy which is built on the premise that man was created first and woman last, hence woman is inferior is unable to stand the test of close scrutiny (pp. 34-35). Davidson (2007) further argues that, "the movement in Genesis 2 is not from superior to inferior or from leadership to submission but from incompleteness to completeness. Woman is created as the climax, the culmination of the story and as Adam's full equal" (p. 27), with God's acknowledging the completion of His work as "very good (Gen 1:31). According to Achtemeier (1976),

there is no hint here whatever of any superior or inferior station . . . the wife who is created from the rib, is the one who corresponds to the man, who reflects back to him the nature of his being ("This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh") and thus can be loved as himself ("He who loves his wife loves himself," Eph. 5:28; "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," Lev. 19:18; Mark 12:31 and pars.). There is here only a joy and relief that oneness and companionship have at last been found, and the confession that such wondrous gifts have been given by a very good God. Such is the nature of the marital union as the Lord meant it to be (pp. 71-72).

Since Genesis, the book of beginnings contains no statement of dominance, subordination, or leadership submission in the relationship of the sexes and since the man and the woman before the fall are presented as fully equal in rank with absolutely no hint of an ontological or functional hierarchy and no leadership/submission relationship between husband and wife (Davidson, 2007, p.3-35), couples having "joined" together in marriage should consider themselves equal, with neither husband nor wife, dominating the relationship. No "his," no "her's," no "mine," but "ours," because the "we-ness" in marriage promotes good marital health as opposed to the "separateness" which promotes a sense of independence and distance in the relationship (Seider et al., 2009, p. 611).

Sexual Intimacy and Marital Health (1 Cor 7:3; Song 4)

Sex and sexuality in today's society has been perverted. It has been capitalized on by commercial industries to market everything from automobiles to toothpaste and the entertainment industry would be at a loss without them. Scripture however, paints the picture of sex and sexuality as a pleasurable part of life and should not be viewed "as something intrinsically bad" (Samplly, 2002, p. 873). Within a marriage, therefore, sex is supposed to "grow and bloom into the best of intimate physical communication" (Wright, 1999, p. 89).

The Bible gives procreation (Gen 1:28; Deut 7:13, 14), recreation (Song 4:10-12; Prov 5:18-19), and communication (Gen 2:25) as three reasons for coitus in a marriage. Wright (1999), in reflecting on sex as a means of communication, suggests that, in God's plan for marriage, "sex was intended to provide a means of totally revealing oneself to the beloved, of pouring one's energies and deepest affection, hopes, and dreams into the loved one. Sex provides a means of presenting one's spouse with the gift of oneself and experiencing a gift in return" (p. 90). Consequently, sexual intercourse is an imparting of knowledge about oneself and of the other, since the term intercourse itself means communication. It is no wonder Scripture says, "Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain" (Gen 4:1). Carried to the highest level, when a man and his wife are naked and "unashamed" they have come to know one another fully and have accepted each other completely.

When addressing the subject of sex to the Corinthian church, Paul says to couples, "The husband should fulfill his wife's sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband's needs" (1 Cor 7:3 NLT). Sex, therefore, plays a significant part in the well-

being of any marriage and “the harm that can be caused by enforced abstinence in respect of cohabitation is well known. The consulting rooms of psychiatrists are thronged with people who suffer in various ways as the outcome of sex frustration. Such abstinence can wither the marriage relationship” (Short, 1953, pp. 77-78).

It is Paul’s conviction that couples should not deprive one another and recommends that they, upon choosing to forgo sexual intercourse in order to have time for prayer, should have mutual consent to do so (1 Cor. 7:5). In addition, couples are admonished to resume a normal relationship sooner, rather than later so as to avoid sexual misconduct. This is because “marriage guards the purity of the race; hence any attempt to introduce lengthy abstention from intercourse between husband and wife would tend to remove the safeguard against fornication that is established by marriage” (Nichols, 1980, p. 707).

There is no wonder soldiers in biblical times were exempt from fighting in battle for at least one year after they were married. According to Deuteronomy 24:5, “if a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married.” “Explicitly, this law states that the husband was to be free to be at home so that he could cause his wife to rejoice. Thus there was to be joy in the total relationship on the part of both male and female” (Cosby, 1984, p. 12).

Furthermore, the Genesis account of creation, speaking of the beauty of sex and human sexuality, says that God having looked at all He had created and made—including the sexuality of Adam and Eve, His crowning work of creation—declared it “very good (Gen 1:31).” The term “very good,” therefore,

connotes the quintessence of goodness, wholesomeness, appropriateness, beauty. It is that which is both morally and aesthetically pleasing. The syllogism is straightforward. Sexuality (including the act of sexual intercourse) is part of God's creation, part of God's crowning act of creating humans. And God's creation is very beautiful/good . . . It is not a mistake, a sinful aberration, a regrettable necessity, a shameful experience, as it has so often been regarded in the history of Christian as well as pagan thought. Rather, human sexuality (as both an ontological state and a relational experience) is divinely inaugurated: it is part of God's perfect design from the beginning and willed as a fundamental aspect of human existence (Davidson, 2007, p. 50).

In addition, within the Jewish culture, "sexual relations were so sacred that they were encouraged particularly on the Jewish Sabbath, in order to heighten the marital bond and thereby bring the proper atmosphere of harmony into the home on this holy day" (Kleinplatz & Ribner, 2007, p. 446). It is interesting to note also that contrary to the well-known myth that Jews only have sex through the hole in a sheet, "Jews are prohibited from any barriers during sex . . . whatever lingerie the couple might be wearing to entice one another should be substantially removed prior to sex" (Kleinplatz & Ribner, 2007, p. 447), since nothing is to interfere with the complete intimacy of the couple during copulation.

The Song of Songs, a poetic work concerned with love and lovers, gives a glimpse and further insight into how sexual intimacy can be nurtured within marriage. This biblical book that gives testimony to the joy in sex "is a collection or anthology of poems reflecting the intimate sensuous and passionate feelings of lovers" (Larue, 1983, p. 163). The poems express overwhelming delight in the beauty of the man's lover and in touching, kissing, and making love. Love for each other has evoked longing and desire between the couple and sexual imageries and erotic expressions are stated by both partners, including the woman who is no passive partner in this sexual escapade.

The book opens with the expression of longing and desire: "Kiss me and kiss me

again, for your love is sweeter than wine” (Song 1:2, NLT). In vs. 13 and 14, the woman exclaims, “My lover is like a sachet of myrrh lying between my breasts. He is like a bouquet of sweet henna blossoms from the vineyards of En-gedi” (NLT). This is an expression of the warm feeling of intimacy that the couple both shared. In chapter 2:4-6, the woman continues her ecstatic praise of her lover by saying, “He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me *was* love. Sustain me with cakes of raisins, Refresh me with apples, For I *am* lovesick. His left hand *is* under my head, and his right hand embraces me” (NKJV). It is important to note, that it is not only the woman who is overcome by love, but her husband also expresses his feelings freely and in descriptive terms which are reflected in the rural environment (Song 4). He describes her eyes behind her veil as the soft eyes of a dove, her dark rippling hair like the movement of a flock of black goats going down a mountainside, her teeth perfectly white like freshly shorn and washed sheep, her lips like scarlet thread in her lovely mouth, her stately neck like the shield of a warrior gracing David’s tower, and her breasts like two fawns. Such a description of the man’s lover is an expression of his appreciation and love for her. Noticeably, they both find endearing ways to express their love for each other as they nurture the sexual intimacy they shared in their relationship. The golden rule, therefore, is applicable even within the context of sexual intimacy between husband and wife: “Do to others as you want them to do to you” (LK 6:31 NIRV). Solomon consequently “praised the loveliness of her bodily form, and she by her response showed the exceeding loveliness of her soul” (Spence & Exell, 1975, p.93).

Against this background, time spent with a husband or wife in sexual activities should, therefore, be one of joy and delight. This is evident in the response given by the

lady regarding her lover, when asked by the daughters of Jerusalem who inquired, “Where has your lover gone, most beautiful of women? Which way did your lover turn, that we may look for him with you” (Song 6:1 NIV)? Her response was; “My lover has gone down to his garden, to the beds of spices, to browse in the gardens and to gather lilies. I am my lover's and my lover is mine; he browses among the lilies” (Song 6:2-3). Cosby (1984) suggests that in “employing the garden imagery that we see elsewhere describing the sweetness of lovemaking (for example, 4:12-5:1; 7:6-13), she informs us that her beloved is in bed with her, enjoying his garden” (p. 78).

While there are currently numerous publications instructing couples in the arts and skills of making love to each other, the insight provided by the couple in the Song of Songs makes for useful reading and instruction for those who desire to nurture intimacy within their marriage. The Song of Songs can, therefore, be important in helping “those raised in strict religious environments which often tend to place negative emphases on human sexuality and sexual feelings, to discover that there is a biblical precedent for “letting go” in a sexual situation” (Larue, 1983, p. 166) with his/her spouse. In addition, these biblical writings of Solomon suggest that sex can be enjoyed and is not just reserved for procreation as is believed by some, but also for marital pleasure, as is indicated in the case of Solomon and his spouse. Suffice it to say, “nice people, biblical people, also enjoyed sexual intercourse” (Larue, 1983, p. 166) and there is nothing wrong with a woman especially letting her husband know that she enjoys and desires loving attention and his body. In fact it is quite appropriate for her, also, to initiate the sexual activity between herself and her husband. Of course, this does not exempt those who are of old age, because sexuality was also intrinsically woven within the very fiber of their

being during the creation of human kind by the God who commanded, “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28). It is interesting to note that Moses was virile even at the age of one hundred and twenty and Abraham continued to engage actively in sexual activities well beyond that age (Gen 21:1-3).

Sexual happiness, therefore, follows marital happiness, even though a relationship that is not quite healthy can be strengthened and reinforced by sexual sharing. This is due to the fact that sex does communicate knowledge, hence “where the knowledge is without guilt or shame . . . it leads to trust and the willingness to explore and to communicate further” (Cole, 1959, p. 278). It is important, therefore, for couples to nurture sexual intimacy within their marriage because when this is done, the marriage will be vitalized and both partners will feel fulfilled and happy.

Summary

One of the most devastating things that can ever happen to any family is experiencing divorce. When a husband and wife get divorced families are broken up, children are traumatized, and society is thrown out of balance. When God created male and female and joined them together through marriage, His intention was for them to have a lifelong marital relationship together. The Genesis account of marriage tells us that when God created the man, He observed that it was not good for the man to be alone and so He made him an “help meet” to satisfy his longing for companionship (Gen 2:18).

When God wed the first couple by giving the woman to the man, it was an indication of the importance of the marriage institution and sets marriage apart as a divinely stamped institution. It is for this reason that a man should leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and they shall become one flesh (Gen 2:24). So

significant is marriage that centuries after the first marriage took place, Jesus validated this institution by attending a wedding at Cana in Galilee (John 2:1-2). He also demonstrated His support for marriage by informing the religious leaders who questioned Him on the subject of divorce, “Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate” (Mk 10:9 NIV). This, consequently, serves as an indication of the resentment that God has for divorce, which generally occurs due to the “hardness” of individuals’ hearts, as well as their unwillingness to forgive. Marriage should, therefore, be given focused attention by those who intend to have a happy and lifelong relationship.

It would appear that an interpretation of key Scriptural passages relating to marriage have created tremendous debate and division not just among scholars, but also among married partners. One such passage of Scripture is Ephesians 5:21-33 where Paul admonishes husbands to love their wives while wives are to respect their husbands. Research (Gottman & Silver, 1994) has shown that love and respect in marriage do help with marital satisfaction, but generally, when both parties extend and receive both love and respect (pp. 61-62).

Therefore, I must agree with Davidson (2007) who suggests that both male and female within the marriage relationship are fully equal in rank with no hint of a functional hierarchy or leadership/submission between a husband and wife (p. 35). Consequently, if couples would approach their relationship as partners, being willing to share life with each other at every level and embrace an attitude of “we-ness” as opposed to “separateness,” marital satisfaction would be greatly realized (Seider et al., 2009, p. 611).

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Literature Contributing Understanding to Marital Satisfaction

Introduction

The review of literature is divided into two sections. The first section, discusses marital distress and its implication on marital, mental, and physical health. The second section discusses factors that are identified as relating to marital satisfaction in the literature. In addition, the second section is organized within the context of an “issue” and “solution” format.

Marital Distress and Its Implication on Marital, Mental and Physical Health

Marital distress, which “refers to one or both partners in a committed relationship experiencing a high level of dissatisfaction and distress accompanying that state” (Lebow, 2005, p. 38), is among the most stressful and upsetting of human problems and is usually accompanied with powerful feelings of sadness, anger, rage, disbelief, shock, and depression (Lebow, 2005, p. 38). There is a large and growing body of literature that “links problems in intimate relationships with the onset, co-occurrence, and course of mental and physical health problems in adults” (Snyder & Whisman, 2003, p. 3); for many, “marital distress ultimately results in divorce with its myriad of additional difficulties and risk factors” (Lebow, 2005, p. 38).

The consequences of marital distress and the ultimate demise of a marriage can have far-reaching consequences. One study (Wilmoth, 2006) found that “the high rate of divorce in the United States has resulted in high emotional, financial, and social costs to adults and children” (p. 20). Research in Canada (Strohschein, 2005) has shown that even prior to a marital breakup, children of parents heading for divorce tend to develop mental health problems and show higher levels of depression/anxiety, as well as “significantly higher anti-social behavior . . . compared to children whose parents remain married” (p. 1297). In addition, a longitudinal study has shown that men and women whose marriage has broken up have a higher risk of being depressed than people who remained married (Rotermann, 2007).

Consequently, “there are few problems as frequently encountered or as pervasive in their impact as marital distress. Any person who has experienced significant marital distress, or witnessed the feelings of a friend or relative in the midst of such distress easily recognizes that marital distress is among the most stressful and upsetting of human problems” (Lebow, 2005, p. 38).

Marital Health

Although married individuals across a number of surveys have reported greater happiness and life satisfaction and have a lower risk of depression than their unmarried counterparts (Robles, & Kiecolt-Glaser, 2003, p. 410), “more people seek therapy for marital problems than for any other type of problem” (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 4). Among the many marital distress-related concerns that couples seek therapy for are “emotional disengagement, power struggles, problem-solving and communication difficulties, jealousy and extrarelational involvements, value and role conflicts, sexual

dissatisfaction and violence” (Gurman & Fraenkel, 2002, p. 201). It is for this reason that current estimates of the chances of first marriages ending in divorce range between 50 and 67 percent and that of second marriages being either about the same or about 10 percent higher than for first marriages (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 3). In other words, “two out of every three new couples are headed for divorce—unless something changes” (Gottman & Silver, 1994, p. 16).

According to Gottman and Silver (1994), a healthy marriage is one where there exists a stable equilibrium, “when this balance, or ‘marital ecology’ becomes upset, you and your mate will find yourselves frustrated, sniping or lost in a dead end, quarreling more and more” (p. 29). This will further lead to partners becoming

lost in hostile and negative thoughts and feelings, as their bodies react to the stress, making it harder to think rationally, to respond calmly. Soon, the destructive interactions I call “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” take over. They are criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and withdrawal. At this point, unless a couple makes changes, they are likely to find themselves sliding helplessly toward the end of their marriage (Gottman, & Silver, 1994, p. 29).

Mental and Physical Health

Whisman (1999) has found a strong association between marital distress and psychiatric disorders, in general, as well as in relation to each of the 15 major groups of psychiatric disorders, in particular. “Typically, rates of these disorders were double for those who were maritally distressed compared to those who were not. Among those with significant levels of marital distress, 15 percent had concurrent mood disorders, 28 percent anxiety disorders, and 15 percent alcohol or substance use disorder” (Lebow, 2005, p. 38). Studies have also shown that marital distress has the potential of influencing

alcohol abuse (Whisman, 1999, 701) and negatively impacting physical health and children (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p.4). Gottman and Silver (1999) further state that

there are serious consequences of marital dissolution for the mental and physical health of both spouses. These negative effects include increased risk of psychopathology; increased rates of automobile accidents, including fatalities; increased incidence of physical illness, suicide, violence and homicide; decreased longevity; significant immunosuppression; and increased mortality from diseases (p. 3).

In addition, “problems in intimate relationships could have substantial negative impact on one’s mood, appetite, sleep and other functioning” (Snyder & Whisman, 2003, p. 7). Furthermore, “spouses who were unhappy with their marriage were approximately three times more likely than happily married spouses to develop an episode of major depression over a 12-month period” (Snyder & Whisman, 2003, p. 8).

In spite of this daunting revelation regarding the effect of marital distress on one’s health, however, findings from the National Longitudinal mortality study illustrate that generally, “nonmarried individuals had elevated rates of mortality compared to married individuals” (Robles & Kiecolt-Glaser, 2003, p. 409).

Factors that are Identified as Relating to Marital Satisfaction

According to a study on marital satisfaction (Hirschberger et al., 2009), a “partner’s satisfaction tends to be high around the time of the wedding, after which it begins a slow but steady decline” (p. 402). It is for this reason that “the oldest question in the research literature is, what distinguishes a happy marriage from one that is unhappy” (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989, p. 47). Among the many tools that have been developed to respond scientifically to this question is the Marital Satisfaction Inventory – Revised (MSI-R). This MSI-R “includes a global distress measure and subscales assessing

affective communication, problem solving communication, aggression, time together, disagreement about finances, sexual dissatisfaction, role orientation, family history of distress, dissatisfaction with children, and conflict over child rearing” (Lebow, 2005, p. 40).

These areas also reflect Gurman and Fraenkel’s (2002) findings that identify communication, power struggles, unrealistic expectations, sex, problem solving, money, and children as areas that have a tremendous impact on a couple’s marital satisfaction (p. 202).

Communication in Marriage

The Issue

According to therapists in a Whisman, Dixon & Johnson (1997) study, communication is the most common problem addressed in couple therapy and according to Litzinger and Gordon (2005), “effective communication has a central component to marital satisfaction” (pp. 409-410). Stanley, Markman and Whitton (2002) suggest that, “destructive communication, or negative interaction, between partners has been linked with lower relationship satisfaction and higher rates of divorce or break-up” (p. 660).

In addressing this issue, “communication researchers often disaggregate the myriad of partners’ communications with one another into two major categories” (Snyder & Whisman, 2003, p. 15). The first category focuses on the partners’ conflict or problem-solving interactions, while the second major category focuses on partners sharing information and providing support for one another (Snyder & Whisman, 2003, p.15, 16). However, “mental health researchers have tended to focus on how couples communicate

when they are trying to solve problems in their relationship” (Snyder & Whisman, 2003, p. 15).

Consequently, researchers have suggested that “unhappy couples appear to suffer from a skills deficit that inhibits their ability to communicate effectively and this deficit significantly contribute to marital dissatisfaction” (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005, p. 410).

The research further indicates that the couples who lack the necessary skills to regulate their emotional expressiveness and communicate successfully tend to be defensive or to withdraw from a conflict situation which consequently contribute to marital dissatisfaction and dissolution (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005, p. 410). Britt, Grable, Golf, and White (2008) have found that

well-educated individuals usually have been able to communicate more effectively than less educated individuals, which helped alleviate or reduce stress levels that arose in relationships. Because of their increased communication skills, well-educated individuals have been better able to maintain equality in the relationship. Less educated couples (i.e., high school diploma or less) often have encountered more stress in their relationship as a result of their lack of communication skills (p.33).

According to Wright (1999), we send messages during our communication. Every message has three components and includes the actual content (7% of the message sent), the tone of the voice (38% of the message sent), and the nonverbal (55% of the message sent). If there are changes in the tone of voice or in the nonverbal, many different messages may be expressed even while using the same words, statements, or questions. The three components should, therefore, be complementary so as to avoid mixed messages during the communication process (p. 65) since “most people trust nonverbal cues more than they trust one another’s words” (Gottman & DeClaire, 2001, p. 171).

Litzinger and Gordon (2005) suggest, however, that there may be a component in addition to skills deficit that may impede a couples’ effective problem solving (pp. 410,

411). Studies indicate that spouses were better at problem-solving when they interacted with strangers than when they interacted with their partners (MacMillan, 2007).

The Solution

Dr. John Gottman, a psychology professor and researcher for over twenty-five years and one who has researched communication and its relation on marital satisfaction within the context of couple interaction, has claimed that he can predict whether a couple will stay together or divorce with over a 90 percent accuracy rate after listening to the couple interact for as little as five minutes (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 2). With a factor so critical to marital health, one major approach to communication in marriage is the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) approach, developed for couples' education and therapy, which advocates using the active listening technique in communication (Hafen & Crane, 2003, p. 8). Active listening has been described as a communication technique that employs the use of emphatic comments, asking appropriate questions, restatements, paraphrasing, and summarizing for the purpose of verification (Hafen & Crane, 2003, p. 7; McNaughton, Hamlin, McCarthy, Head-Reeves, & Schreiner, 2007, p. 224). In addition, McKay, Fanning & Peleg (2006) view communication as "a two-way, collaborative process, even when one person is ostensibly doing all the talking" (p. 16). McKay et al. (2006) further suggest that "there is a lot more to listening than merely being quite while your partner talks. Real listening is distinguished by your intention. If your intention is to understand, enjoy, learn, or help your partner, then you are really listening" (p. 12). The major goal in active listening, therefore, is to "develop a clear understanding of the speakers concern and also to clearly

communicate the listener's interest in the speaker's message" (McNaughton et al., 2007, p. 224).

According to Hafen & Crane (2003), the purpose of the active listening technique in marriage "is to help a couple when stressed by conflict to avoid the typical dangers to good communication, such as escalation, invalidation and withdrawal" (p. 8). Gottman, Coan, Canere, & Swanson (1998), however, suggest that active listening is not predictive of happiness or stability in marriage and hence, recommend that the active listening model be abandoned "in favor of a model of increased softening and gentleness in start-up, de-escalating, changing the balance of power in favor of the husband's increased acceptance of influence of his wife and increasing physiological soothing by self and partner" (p. 20). On the other hand, Hafen and Crane (2003) have, indicated "a replication of Gottman's results before abandoning active listening" (p. 10), since neither the advocates nor detractors of active listening techniques have provided a convincing argument. Furthermore, considering its widespread use, it is recommended that active listening techniques remain part of every couple's repertoire in a bid to improve their marital satisfaction (Hafen & Crane, 2003, p. 12).

Suffice to say, connection between couples (Gottman & DeClaire, 2001, p. 229), which is based on a deep friendship, is the secret of maintaining a happy marriage (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 19) and not necessarily the active listening skill that couples might possess (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 11). Gottman and DeClaire (2001) further suggest that couples pay attention to each other's facial expression during their interaction, since it is the face that tells us about what a person is feeling about us, about themselves and about the world around them. Furthermore, the face is a very significant

tool for making and responding to bids for connection, thus having a clear sense of how we use our faces to convey feelings is of paramount importance. This is because, of all the parts of the human body, the face is the most significant in expressing emotion (pp. 172-173).

Consequently, in concurring with Gottman and Silver, Love and Stosny (2007) suggest that couples “are not disconnected because they have poor communication; they have poor communication because they are disconnected” (p. 5).

Power Struggles In Marriage: We-ness vs Separateness

The Issue

In the Whisman et al. (1997) study, therapists reported that power struggles were the second most commonly treated problem. According to Byrne and Carr (2000),

power maybe conceptualized as a construct incorporating three analytically distinct but interrelated domains: power bases, process and outcomes. Power bases are the economic and personal assets (such as income, economic independence, control of surplus spending money, commitment, sex-role attitudes, desire for intimacy and both physical and psychological aggression) that form the basis of one partner’s control over the other. Power processes are the interactional techniques such as persuasion, problem-solving or demandingness that individuals use in their attempts to gain control over aspects of the relationship . . . Power outcomes concern who has the final say, that is who determines the outcome in problem-solving or decision-making (p. 409).

Love and Stosny (2007) suggest that “power struggles happen when two people fight to protect themselves from shame and fear . . . they try to control each other or even force the other to submit. Because human beings hate to submit, power struggles always result in more resentment and hostility” (p. 35). Schnarch (1997) further suggests that “our desire to possess our partner is inherently frustrated by the immutable fact that we are two fundamentally separate (though interrelated) people” (p. 64). Therefore, when

there is an imbalance of power within a relationship, “there’s almost inevitably a great deal of marital distress” (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 97) accompanying it. The best solution to power struggles within a marriage, therefore, is “a sense of “we-ness” between husband and wife” (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 190).

The Solution

In a University of California, Berkeley study (Seider et al., 2009), researchers analyzed conversations between 154 middle-aged and older couples about points of disagreement in their marriages and found that those who used pronouns such as “we,” “our” and “us” behaved more positively toward one another and showed less physiological stress. On the contrary, couples who emphasized their “separateness” by using pronouns such as “I,” “me” and “you” were found to be less satisfied in their marriages. According to the study, the use of pronouns that expressed separateness was most strongly linked to unhappy marriages. In addition, the study discovered that older couples identified themselves more as “we” than did their middle-aged counterparts, which further suggests that facing obstacles and overcoming challenges together, may give couples a greater sense of shared identity. Consequently, the use of “we” language is a natural outgrowth of a sense of partnership and of being on the same team (ScienceDaily, 2010). On the contrary, according to Seider et al., compared to we-ness, separateness was associated with a very different set of marital qualities, including more negative emotional behavior and greater marital dissatisfaction, (2009, p. 610).

Research (Simmons et al., 2005) has also found that we-focused marriages were associated with more positive, effective and mutually satisfying problem solutions.

Hence, this we-ness approach to marriage and problem solving, maybe an indication as to

why these couples have lower rates of long-term marital distress and dissolution than other couples (pp. 934-935). In addition, we-ness can be demonstrated by an approach that Kopp (2007) refers to as being “firm and friendly” when dealing with a power-struggle situation. To be firm is an expression of self-respect, while being friendly conveys respect for one’s partner. Having an understanding of the current situation as well as being willing to respond appropriately to it is a characteristic of being firm. This is not suggesting that one be firm about what his or her partner is doing nor being firm about what one thinks his partner should or should not do. Instead, being firm has to do with focusing on changing ourselves, how we view the situation and how we will act in the situation whether it be withdrawing from the power-struggle or solving the problem and improving the relationship.

Another way of dealing with the power-struggle in a relationship is either to fight or give in. Choosing either to fight or give in, however, only serves to maintain the power-struggle as opposed to diffusing it. While fighting maintains the power-struggle by continuing the tug-of-war, giving in maintains the power-struggle by allowing the partner to “win” and to over-power us. The best approach in dealing with the power-struggle, therefore, is to be “firm and friendly, while avoiding the temptation to fight or give in” (p. 272), an approach Schnarch (1997) refers to as differentiation (Kopp, 2007, p. 55).

Differentiation is referred to as

the process by which we become more uniquely ourselves by maintaining ourselves in relationship with those we love.... Differentiation involves balancing two basic life forces: the drive for individuality and the drive for togetherness. Individuality propels us to follow our own directives, to be on our own, to create a unique identity. Togetherness pushes us to follow the directives of others, to be a part of the group . . . Giving up your individuality to be together is as defeating in the long run as giving up your relationship to maintain individuality. Either way, you end up being less of a person with less of a relationship (Schnarch, 1997, pp. 51, 54).

At the heart of differentiation, therefore, is “the ability to balance individuality and togetherness” (Schnarch, 1997, p. 67). Consequently, a marriage with well-differentiated individuals will be a marriage where “we-ness” will take precedence over separateness, thus enhancing a higher relationship satisfaction (Seider et al., 2009). It is for this reason that having an equal say in making important decisions is so pivotal in marriage. Furthermore, “sharing power is one of the foundations of intimacy” (Larson, 2003, p. 84).

Problem Solving in Marriage

The Issue

Studies (Gurman & Fraenkel, 2002, p. 2001; Stanley et al., 2002), have consistently indicated that among the many known issues that contribute to marital dissatisfaction, marital conflict is a major risk factor “for many kinds of dysfunction and psychopathology” (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005, p. 409). Most people were never taught how to deal effectively with conflict and hence, do not know how to deal openly with them when they arise (Wright, 1999, p. 76). Consequently, “many couples are shocked by the disagreements that they have and interpret their quarrels as signs that their love has gone” (Brown & Brown, 1999, p. 69). However, according to Gottman & Silver (1999), conflict is inevitable in every relationship since “every marriage is a union between two individuals who bring to it their own opinions, personality quirks and values” (p. 129). Lasting marriages, therefore, are those that result from a couple’s ability to resolve the conflicts that are inevitable in their relationships (Gottman & Silver, 1994, p. 28), a process that is easier to accomplish when two individuals feel connected to each other (Love & Stosny, 2007, pp. 29-30). This is due to the fact that no matter what conflict

couples may have, “sex, money, housework, kids—all of them long for evidence that their spouses understand and care about what they are feeling” (Gottman & DeClaire, 2001, p. 4).

Research (Gottman & Silver, 1999) has found that all marital conflicts, whether they are mundane annoyances or all-out wars, fall under one of two categories—resolvable or perpetual problems. Therefore, identifying and defining one’s disagreements is key in customizing relevant coping strategies to deal with either of these two types of conflict at any given time (p. 129).

Perpetual problems—“conflicts based on personality differences or preferences in lifestyle that never go away” (Gottman, Gottman & DeClaire, 2006, p. 260)—are in the category within which the majority of marital conflicts fall, an estimated 69 percent, to be exact (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 130). In marriages that are unstable, perpetual problems eventually kill the relationship and instead of coping with their problems effectively, couples get gridlocked over them. The result of this gridlock is emotional disengagement from each other, which further takes a couple on a course towards parallel lives and inevitably, loneliness, and the ultimate demise of the marriage. The key to unlocking this gridlock, however, is uncovering and sharing with each other the significant personal dreams that each partner has for his/her life (Gottman & Silver, 1999, pp. 132-133).

Unlike perpetual problems, solvable problems are “less painful, gut-wrenching, or intense than perpetual gridlock ones. This is because when you argue over a solvable problem, your focus is only on a particular dilemma or situation. There is no underlying conflict that’s fueling your dispute” (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 134). Though solvable

problems might sound relatively simpler compared to unsolvable ones, they can also cause a great deal of pain between a husband and wife. In other words, it does not mean that a problem gets resolved just because it is solvable. Consequently, couples who have not learned effective techniques for conquering their solvable problems will generally experience excessive tension in their relationship (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 133).

The Solution

Thus, according to Gottman and Silver (1999), the best way to cope effectively with either kind of problem is to communicate basic acceptance of your partner's personality. This is because human nature generally dictates that it is almost impossible to accept advice from someone, unless you feel understood by that other person. Consequently before a spouse asks his/her partner to make changes in any area of life, he/she must ensure that the partner feels that he/she is understood (p. 149).

In a University of Michigan (2008) study, "Couples in which both the husband and wife suppress their anger when one attacks the other die earlier than members of couples where one or both partners express their anger and resolve the conflict." In addition, since marital conflict contributes to marital dissatisfaction (Stanley et al., 2002), it is critically important for couples to "focus less on the conflict itself and more on the dreams, goals, or wishes that underlie each person's fixed position within that struggle" as they seek to resolve their conflict (Gottman & DeClaire, 2001, p. 209). Gottman and DeClaire (2001) believe that most conflicts do not arise from pathology, but instead, they "develop because people attach different meanings to the same situations, which gets in the way of their ability to bid and respond to one another's bid for connection" (p. 208).

The recommendation therefore, is to stop trying to resolve the conflict and instead, talk about the meaning one's position holds for him/her. In other words, what are the stories that support the ideas of what the situation means to you? What are the feelings that you have about the issue? What are your dreams, goals, or wishes that are related to those feelings? Furthermore, if the relationship is one in which dreams are kept hidden, then partners will find themselves having the same arguments over and over, with a rehashing of the same issues without ever reaching a satisfying resolution. On the other hand, if partners stop trying to solve the problem and start uncovering the dreams hidden within such issues, progress would be realized (Gottman & Declaire, 2001, pp. 209-211). In addition to identifying and talking about the meaning behind a couple's conflict, Gottman and Silver (1999) recommend five steps in resolving conflict in a loving relationship (p. 158).

The first step, "Soften Your Start up," will most likely produce a stable and happy marriage, if used during most of a couple's arguments (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 161). This is because research (Gottman & Silver, 1999) has shown that if your discussion begins with a harsh startup, it will ultimately end on a negative note even if couples make a lot of attempts to "make nice" in between (p. 27). In addition, "96 percent of the time you can predict the outcome of a conversation based on the first three minutes of the fifteen-minutes interaction. A harsh startup simply dooms you to failure" (Gottman & Silver, 1999, 27). In other words, "if you start an argument harshly—meaning you attack your spouse verbally—you'll end up with at least as much tension as you began. But if you use a softened start-up—meaning you complain but don't criticize or otherwise

attack your spouse—the discussion is likely to be productive” (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 161).

One method of softening startups during a couple’s interaction is to use phrases starting with *I* because they are “less likely to be critical and to make listeners defensive than statements starting with *you*” (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 164). Research done by Simmons et al. (2005), has also found that “spouses reporting greater marital satisfaction tended to use higher proportions of *I* than other participants did” during marital interaction (p. 935). The point to be borne in mind as a way of softening startups is that “if your words focus on how you’re feeling rather than on accusing your spouse, your discussion will be far more successful” (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 165).

“Learn To Make And Receive Repair Attempts” is the second step in resolving conflict in a loving relationship. According to Gottman and Silver (1999), repair attempts are efforts made by a couple to de-escalate tension during a conflict; it is putting on the brakes so that flooding is prevented (p. 177). A key factor in the effectiveness of a repair attempt is the state of a couple’s relationship. Hence, in happy marriages, couples send and receive repair attempts quite easily while in unhappy marriages, even the most eloquent of repair attempts can be very ineffective due to the presence of a lot of negativity (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 172). In such cases where repair attempts become difficult to hear due to the fact that the relationship is engulfed in negativity, the best strategy is to make the attempts “obviously formal in order to emphasize them” (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 172).

Consequently, the use of words such as “please say that more gently” or “that hurt my feelings” can prevent a conversation from spiraling out of control. Therefore when a

spouse announces a repair attempt, his/her partner's job is to try and accept it and subsequently, view the interruption as a bid to make things better (Gottman & Silver, 1999, pp.173-176).

The third step is "Soothe Yourself And Each Other," a process of calming the body down in order to cope creatively with the conflict as opposed to running away from it (Gottman et al., 2006, p. 63). On the other hand, flooding which means "that your spouse's negativity – whether they in the guise of criticism or contempt or even defensiveness – is so overwhelming and so sudden, that it leaves you shell-shocked" (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 34), making it harder "to think, listen and communicate effectively" (Gottman et al., 2006, p.63). While activities such as listening to music, exercising or meditation technique can be viewed as self-soothing, massaging one's partner—a perfect antidote to a stressful discussion—can be considered as a way of soothing one's partner. To soothe one's partner is, therefore,

of enormous benefit to a marriage because its really a form of reverse conditioning. In other words, if you frequently have the experience of being calmed by your spouse, you will stop seeing your partner as a trigger of stress in your life and instead associate him or her with feeling relaxed. This automatically increases the positivity in your relationship (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 180).

The fourth step in solving marital conflict is "Compromise." Gottman and Silver (1999) contend that in loving intimate relationships, it is not possible for both partners to get things all their way even if each person is convinced s/he is right. Consequently, negotiation has to take place, bearing in mind that negotiation can only take place after softening startup, repairing discussion, and keeping calm has taken place. This is because following these steps prepares you for the compromise by getting you into a positive

mode. Before trying to resolve a conflict, however, you have to remember that the corner stone of any compromise is the fourth principle of marriage, accepting influence (p. 181).

The fifth and final step in resolving a conflict is “Be Tolerant Of Each Other’s Faults.” The main idea of step five is that conflict resolution is not about one person’s changing, but instead it is about negotiating, finding common ground and ways of accommodating each other. Furthermore, until partners accept each other’s flaws, they will not be able to compromise successfully (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 185).

While these five steps are helpful in resolving conflicts that are solvable, Gottman and Silver (1994) identify four ways of interacting that they believe will actively doom a relationship. They are identified as “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” (p. 72).

The first Horseman, Criticism, “is any statement that implies that there is something globally wrong with one’s partner, something that is probably a lasting aspect of the partner’s character. Any statement that begins with ‘you always’ or ‘you never’ will be a criticism rather than a complaint” (Gottman, 1999, p. 42). Unlike a complaint which is a specific statement of anger, displeasure, distress, or other negativity, a criticism is less specific and generally has blame in it. A statement of complaint could be a phrase such as “We don’t go out as much as I’d like to,” while a criticism phrase could be “You never take me anywhere” (Gottman & Silver, 1994, p. 76). Criticism, therefore, elicits defensiveness (Gottman, 1999, p.42) and a harsh startup usually comes in the guise of criticism (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 28). Furthermore, “problems occur when criticism becomes so pervasive—or one partner is sensitive to it—that it corrodes the marriage” (Gottman & Silver, 1994, pp. 76-77).

Contempt, an emotion that is fueled by long-simmering negative thoughts about one's partner (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 31), is the second Horseman and refers to any statement or nonverbal behavior that puts oneself on a higher plane than one's partner" (Gottman, 1999, p. 44). This is often expressed through sarcasm, cynicism, name-calling, eye-rolling, sneering, mockery, and hostile humor (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 29). Contempt, is powerfully corrosive to marital health (Gottman, 1999, p. 46) and "the worst of the four horsemen, is poisonous to a relationship because it conveys disgust. It's virtually impossible to resolve a problem when your partner is getting the message you're disgusted with him or her. Inevitably, contempt leads to more conflict rather than reconciliation" (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 29). Furthermore, the intention to insult and psychologically abuse one's partner is what separates contempt from criticism (Gottman & Silver, 1994, p. 79) and "couples who are contemptuous of each other are more likely to suffer from infectious illnesses (colds, flu, and so on) than other people" (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 31). As a way to neutralize contempt for one's partner, Gottman and Silver (1994) suggest that you "stop seeing arguments with your spouse as a way to retaliate or exhibit your superior stance" (p. 84).

The third Horseman is Defensiveness, an attempt to defend oneself from a perceived attack and takes the common form of innocent victim posture, with whining accompanying it. Defensiveness generally includes denying responsibility for the problem, which further fuels the flames of marital conflict because it suggests the other person is the culprit or the guilty party. In other words, it is not both of you who have the problem; instead, it is the mean individual that you are unfortunately married to (Gottman, 1999, pp. 44-45). Research (Gottman & Silver 1994) has shown, however,

“that if you are genuinely open and receptive when your partner is expecting a defensive response, your partner is less likely to criticize or react contemptuously when disagreements arise” (p. 93).

The fourth Horseman, Stonewalling, occurs when the listener withdraws from the interaction, usually characterized by “brief monitoring glances, looking away and down, maintain a stiff neck, vocalize hardly at all” (Gottman, 1999, p. 46). During this kind of interaction, the “stonewaller” who is trying to avoid a fight is also unwittingly avoiding his marriage (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 33). Research (Gottman, 1999) has shown that men are more likely to stonewall than women, however, when women stonewall, it is predictive of divorce (p. 46). Gottman and Silver (1994) believe that one of the reasons men tend to stonewall more than women is because “men tend to be more physiologically overwhelmed than women by marital tension . . . Therefore, men may feel a greater, perhaps instinctive need to flee from intense conflict with their spouse in order to protect their health” (p. 95). The fourth Horseman does not have to signal the demise of a relationship. However, it must be borne in mind that “once the fourth Horseman becomes a regular resident, it takes a good deal of hard work and soul searching to save the marriage” (Gottman & Silver, 1994, p. 95).

Therefore, as one thinks about resolving his or her marital conflict, it is important to remember “to focus less on the conflict itself and more on the dreams, goals, or wishes that underlie each person’s fixed position within that struggle” (Gottman & DeClaire, 2001, p. 209).

Sexual Intimacy In Marriage

The Issue

According to Larson (2003), unresolved power problems usually end up in the bedroom with you (p. 84) and “it is estimated that one out of every three couples struggle with problems associated with low sexual desire” (Davis, 2003, p. 4). In addition, research (Schnarch, 2002) suggests that anywhere from 10 percent of all men and 25 percent to 63 percent of all women have sexual problems, with one out of three men having some difficulty with erection by age 60 and one out of five women not enjoying sex (pp. 14-15). Sexual desire problems are, therefore, “couples’ most common sexual complaint” (Schnarch, 2009, p. 3). Furthermore, 20 percent of married couples have sex fewer than ten times per year with complaints about low desire being the number one problem brought to sex therapists (Davis, 2003, p. 4).

Gottman and Silver (1999) contend that, “no other area of a couple’s life offers more potential for embarrassment, hurt and rejection than sex” (p. 200). On the other hand, research (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005) has shown that satisfaction with one’s sexual relationship also plays a vital role in creating and maintaining a happy marriage (p. 410). Studies (Larson, 2003) have also found that

when things are going well, sex contributes only 15% to the overall satisfaction of a relationship. But if things aren’t going well, it contributes over 85% to the dissatisfaction. This is partly because a good sex life augments other areas of satisfaction so that it becomes one of many good things happening in the relationship (p. 147).

Furthermore, when sexuality is dysfunctional or nonexistent, it plays an inordinately powerful role, in a relationship, draining the marriage of its intimacy and good feelings (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005 p.411).

Among the many factors that are associated with sexual satisfaction, Cheung et al. (2008) identify work, length of marriage, children, and sexual dysfunction as having correlations. As it relates to work, it is generally noted that working couples have less time for intimate contact, hence, couples in which both partners are holding full-time jobs engage in sex less frequently than those in which one partner does not work full-time outside the home.

In regards to length of marriage, married couples tend to have less sex and to feel less sexually satisfied as they get older due to a habitation effect that results from an increased accessibility of one's partner, as well as from the predictability in sexual behavior with that spouse over time.

Regarding the association between children and sexual satisfaction, couples with children engage in sex less frequently than those without children. In addition, couples without children or with only one child engage in sex more frequently than couples with five or more children and couples with very young children (aged 0-4) engage in sex less than those with older children (aged 5-18). In a study by Ahlborg, Rudeblad, Linner and Linton (2008), it was discovered that majority of first-time parents had become discontented with the sexual component of their relationship when their newborn child was 6 months due to tiredness by both mothers and fathers (p. 296).

Having a medical history of sexual problems can also be a contributing factor to sexual satisfaction. Research has shown that female partners of men with erectile dysfunction had a significantly lower level of sexual satisfaction than those whose partners did not suffer from the condition (Cheung, Wong, Liu, Yip, Fan, & Lam, 2008, pp.130-131). This is due to the fact that for the majority of males, problems of sexual

desire are the result of dysfunction and not vice versa. In other words, “he once had desire, but it is now inhibited, low or nonexistent. This destructive cycle is anticipatory anxiety, performance anxiety resulting in dysfunctional sex and sexual avoidance due to embarrassment and failure” (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2003, p. 51).

Another factor that affects sexual satisfaction in addition to those named by Cheung et al., is “Internet Infidelity (Henline & Howard, 2008; Carnes & Carnes, 2010; Gonyea, 2004). Gonyea (2004) defines Internet infidelity as

taking the sexual energy of any sort—thoughts, feelings and behaviors—outside of a committed relationship in such a way that it damages the relationship and then pretending that this drain in energy will affect neither partner nor the relationship as long as it remains undiscovered. This definition not only includes communication online that results in a real life sexual encounter, but also the avoidance of sexual activities in the current, live relationship, masturbation rather than sexual activities with one’s partner, watching others engage in sexual activities online and pre-occupation with sexual fantasies of images found online (p. 382).

Since “no spouse nor partner can compete with the internet” (Carnes & Carnes, 2010, p.12) and since this form of self-disclosure on the Internet brings an intense sense of closeness without the vulnerability of true intimacy with a present committed partner, cyber-betrayal in all cases, results in disconnection in a relationship (Henline & Howard, 2008, p. 27).

The Solution

Irrespective of what factor(s) might be affecting sexual intimacy in marriage, be it work, length of marriage, children or sexual dysfunction, “satisfaction with sexual aspects of the relationship indeed plays a significant role in the overall relationship satisfaction of married couples” (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005, p. 412). It is important to note, therefore, that at the heart of most sexual intimacy problems is the issue of “low

sexual desire” (Schnarch, 2002, p. 16; Cheung et al., 2008, p. 131; Davis, 2003, p. 4).

Schnarch (1999) contends, however, that in every marriage there is always a low desire partner as well as a high desire partner (p. 9). Furthermore,

being the low sexual partner doesn't mean you have no (or almost no) desire. Lets say on an average you like sex once a week. That would make you the LDP if your partner wanted sex twice per week. If he or she didn't want sex at all, you'd be the HDP. The same level of desire that makes you the HDP in one relationship could make you the LDP in another. You could want sex everyday and still be the LDP if you're paired with someone who wants it twice daily. You'd be the HDP if you wanted sex bi-monthly and your spouse didn't want it at all (p. 10).

Research (Cheung et al., 2008) has further found that

interest in sex is associated with sexual satisfaction and sexual frequency. Couples who are interested in sex tend to engage in sex more frequently than those who are not. . . . the decline in interest in sex as the length of a marriage increases is due to a habituation effect, resulting from increased accessibility of a sexual partner and the predictability in sexual behavior with that partner over time (p. 131).

Consequently, in an effort to improve sexual satisfaction among partners who once had a robust sexual desire, with the exception of sexual dysfunction, which requires medical attention (Davis, 2003, p. 65), McCarthy and McCarthy (2003) suggest that couples rekindle their desire for each other by confronting their inhibited sexual desire. In addition, Schnarch (1997) suggests that they become differentiated in an effort to nurture this desire so as to “achieve hot sex and deep intimacy” (p. 14).

According to McCarthy and McCarthy (2003), the four components of sexual functioning are desire, arousal, orgasm and satisfaction. While desire is positive anticipation and feeling that you deserve sexual pleasure, arousal is being receptive and responsive to touching and genital stimulation. Orgasm is letting go and allowing arousal to naturally culminate or climax, and satisfaction is feeling emotionally and physically bonded after a sexual experience. Of these four phases of sexual response, “desire is the

easiest to disrupt. Positive anticipation is the key to desire. If that key is turned off, it affects the entire sexual process” (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2003, p. 35). Therefore, the brain and not one’s hormones or genitals

makes you capable of profound desire and transcendent sex. What makes human sexual desire human is your brain’s unique capacity to bring meaning to sex. Your desire greatly impacts your partner and your relationship and vice versa. It’s an amazing system. How you feel about your partner, yourself and your relationship is critical to robust desire. Enhancing desire requires more than breaking sexual routines. It involves intimacy, passion, eroticism, respecting yourself and liking your partner and being mature enough to be more capable of all these things. Low desire can be caused by problems with hormones, neurochemicals, and a long list of medical problems (Schnarch, 2009, p. 19).

As an approach to dealing with this disruption, Schnarch suggests that sexual problems be approached holistically, using a framework he refers to as the Quantum Model (Schnarch, 2002, p. 31; Schnarch, 1997, p. 81). This model explains how complex aspects of human sexuality such as one’s health, physical stimulation, intimacy, desire, eroticism, passion, and love all fit together. In other words, what does it require to make one’s genitals work and reach orgasm (Schnarch, 2002, p. 31)? The idea is that the body works like any device that can detect electrical signals; the more sensitive the device, the more messages it will be able to detect. The body, which is a more sophisticated signal-detecting device, functions in a similar way as such a device (Schnarch, 1997, p. 81). The Quantum Model therefore, purports that

your body detects stimuli conducted through your nerves, muscles spinal cord and brain. Your body responds when it recognizes it is sexually stimulated. When you are sufficiently sexually aroused for all the intricate processes in your body to take place, your genitals respond. . . . The key idea is that you have to be sufficiently sexually stimulated for your body to respond. This isn’t as simple or obvious as it might seem at first. Sufficient stimulation for human beings involves a lot more than sensory input with a little mental fantasy thrown in (Schnarch, 2002, p. 32).

Consequently, if you are upset, angry, cannot stop thinking about other things and if there exist unresolved emotional issues, it will be difficult to imbue “your sensations with meanings, that add to your pleasure and arousal” (Schnarch, 1997, p. 81).

According to Schnarch (2002), the most common sex therapy interventions other than the Quantum Model of dealing with sexual issues include approaches such as “sensate-focus,” an activity where you and your partner take turns focusing on his or her own physical sensation while being touched. Another approach is one that encourages you to fantasize about sex with someone other than your partner so as to “bypass” negative feelings you harbor toward your mate. Finally, the “squeeze” and “start-up” approach, which is a method of treating premature orgasm, is an activity where one’s partner stops in the midst of sexual activity to give his organ a squeeze so as to delay ejaculation. Unlike the quantum model approach which promotes intimacy, these other approaches to sexual fulfillment destroy intimacy with one’s partner due to the preoccupation with genital performance (p. 22).

Therefore, it must be borne in mind that sexuality is a couple and not an individual experience and that “inhibited sexual desire is best understood as a couple issue. Sexuality is best when both spouses feel free to initiate affectionate, sensual, playful, erotic and intercourse experience” (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2003, p. 29), bearing in mind that “even if you’re okay without sex, if your spouse is miserable and you want to stay married, you’ve got a problem” (Davis, 2003, p. 26). Furthermore, “how you see yourself, how your partner treats you and how you think your partner sees you profoundly shape your sexual desire” (Schnarch, 2009, p. 25).

Since sexuality is a couple issue and not an individual issue it is important to note that “there is no beauty in sex—the beauty is in people . . . Sex becomes beautiful when we bring our personal beauty to it. The issue isn’t simply who your partner is, whether you’re in love, or how good you can do it. Its who you are” (Schnarch, 1997, p. 75). This is the essence of differentiation—the process by which we become uniquely ourselves by maintaining ourselves in relationship with those we love—a process that makes us less intimidated by sexual problems and better able to explore our sexual potential (Schnarch, 1997, p. 75).

Hence, something to be borne in mind as one approaches the issue of sexual satisfaction in marriage is that “a major characteristic of couples who have a happy sex life is that they see lovemaking as an expression of intimacy but they don’t take any difference in their needs or desire personally” (Gottman, & Silver, 1999, p. 203). Also, men usually want more sex than women, with men having no emotional prerequisites for having sex, since closeness is the goal and not the cause of a sex act. On the contrary, women generally want to feel physical and emotional closeness and tenderness before wanting sex, because making love confirms intimacy rather than creating it (Gottman & Silver, 1994, p. 154). Fisher (2004) further suggests that men equate sexual activity with emotional closeness about four times more than women. Furthermore, women generally feel more intimate with their partner when they talk together just before making love, which further suggests that women probably derive intimacy from pre-coital chat since it is an indication that their lover can listen, be patient, and supportive (p. 201).

In addition,

sex is good for you, if you are with someone you are fond of, the time is right and you enjoy this form of exercise and self-expression. Stroking and massaging trigger the

production of oxytocin and the endorphins, brain chemicals that can relax and produce feelings of attachment. . . . And with orgasm, the brain releases oxytocin in women and vasopressin in men—chemicals associated with feelings of attachment. But sex is not only good for relaxation, muscle tone and giving and receiving pleasure; it is often associated with elevated levels of testosterone. And testosterone can promote the production of dopamine, the liquor that fuels romance (Fisher, 2004, p. 194).

Other research (Jannini, Fisher, Bitzer, & McMahon, 2009; Amen, 2007; Love & Stonsy, 2007) has found that sex has many health advantages to both individuals involved in it such as longevity, boosting the immune system, curing the common cold, potential cancer prevention, more restful sleep, pain relief, migraine relief, reduced depression, a younger look, improved sense of smell, improved prostate function, weight loss, overall fitness, a healthier heart, shiny hair, glowing skin, and protection against Alzheimer's and osteoporosis (Amen, 2007, pp.7-22; Love & Stonsy, 2007, pp.148-150).

Finally, the important thing to note about improving sexual satisfaction is that “a viable marriage involves a balance between individual autonomy and sharing your lives as an intimate couple (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2003, p. 23) a process Schnarch (1999; 2002) refers to as differentiation.

Managing Finances In Marriage

The Issue

Disagreement over finances has been ranked among the top reasons contributing to divorce and couples who are dissatisfied with their financial situation usually consider their entire relationship a failure (Dakin & Wampler, 2008, p. 300). Since money is necessary for fulfilling a couple's life dreams, finances will always be an ever-present reality that cannot be ignored and will clearly be an issue that can cause great distress for a marriage (Shapiro, 2007, p. 279).

Research (Papp, Cummings, & Goeke-Morey, 2009) has found that money is a central issue to couple relationship and that money tensions are predictive of marital distress and dissolution (p. 91). According to Shapiro (2007), “money causes anxiety because it is so tied to feeling of success, competence, safety, security and acceptance in our society” (p. 279). In addition to causing anxiety, financial stress can include cognitive, emotional and behavioral responses that affect relationship and further lead to an increase in spousal hostility and a decrease in spousal warmth, marital satisfaction, and stability (Dakin & Wampler, 2008, p. 300).

Financial problems, therefore, can “place a tremendous strain upon the marital relationship” (Wright, 1999, p. 81) and Gottman and Silver (1999) suggest that money conflicts are often “evidence of a perpetual issue, since money is symbolic of many emotional needs—such as for security and power—and goes to the core of our individual value system” (p. 194). Furthermore, “money is a metaphorical currency for power, control, acknowledgment, self-worth, competence, caring, security, commitment and feeling loved and accepted” (Shapiro, 2007, p. 290).

Consequently, because couples cannot live or fulfill their life dreams without money, finances become an ever-present reality that no adult is able to ignore and an issue that can cause great distress for a couple’s relationship (Shapiro, 2007, p. 279). Britt et al. (2008) have found that negative financial life events such as the loss of a job negatively affect relationship satisfaction, with those of lower income levels generally experiencing greater financial stress than others (p. 34). Dakin and Wampler (2008) have also found that money management constitutes a major source of marital conflict and suggest that couples who argue about money are really arguing about how to manage the

money they have. Hence, couples who believe they were handling their finances appropriately were found to be more satisfied in their relationship (pp. 301-302). In other words, the perception of a partner spending large amounts of money with or without appropriate consultation of the other can influence a couple's marital satisfaction one way or the other (Britt et al., 2008, p. 41).

The Solution

While it is predictable that issues about money often trigger arguments, Stanley et al., (2002) found "that there is little difference in relationship quality between couples who argue about money versus other issues" (p. 661) since how couples argue is more important than what they argue about (Gottman & Silver, 1994). Wallace (2008) suggests that couples approach money issues from the premise that people are different and will, therefore, have disagreements, some of which are resolvable and some that they will just have to learn to manage (p. 47). Consequently, Britt et al. (2008) recommend that

prior to becoming involved in a relationship, couples should review their partner's spending and other financial behaviors to ensure that the partner exhibits behaviors that are appropriate and in-line with one's own approach to managing finances. Couples should consider developing a joint financial budget and engage in ongoing consultations with each other prior to making any significant purchase. If financial behaviors are not addressed prior to forming a relationship, the couple may experience decreased satisfaction due to the couple's conflicting perceptions of financial behaviors (p. 41).

In addition, Gottman and Silver (1999) recommend that couples work together as a team in order to manage their financial issues, expressing their concerns, needs and fantasies to each other before coming up with a plan. During this process, each person needs to be firm about items he/she considers nonnegotiable during the development of the plan. The plan should consist of both partners' current expenditures, with a careful

look at each other's income and assets and a method of paying bills on a regular basis.

The plan should also consist of their financial future, which includes long-term financial goals and giving thought to the kinds of financial disasters they would most want to avoid (p. 197). Other good practices recommended by Wallace (2008) include dividing up financial tasks according to interest and ability, saving 10 percent of their income, building an emergency fund, using credit sparingly, paying bills promptly, agreeing on an individual spending cap, allowing each other small indulgences, both partners having a knowledge of where the bank accounts are, and sitting down, at least monthly, to discuss inflow and outflow (p. 48).

It needs to be borne in mind, however, that though money is an "important factor in marital satisfaction" (Dakin & Wampler, 2008, p. 307), having more money does not necessarily make people happier and does not guarantee improved marital satisfaction (Borooah, 2006, p. 428).

Parenting Issues In Marriage

The Issue

Research (Hirschberger, Srivastava, Marsh, Cowan, & Cowan, 2009) has shown that "many married individuals experience significant changes in their lives after they become parents, including identity changes, shifting roles in the marriage and outside the family" (p. 401). In a thirteen-year research study with 130 young families, Gottman and Gottman (2007) discovered that "in the first three years after babies were born, a whopping two-thirds of parents experienced a significant drop in their couple relationship quality" (p. 16). Other research (Clulow, 1991; Ahlborg et al., 2008) has also found a correlation between the arrival of a newborn and a couple's marital satisfaction, with

Clulow (1991) suggesting that there is an “association between the presence of children and the deterioration in the quality of their parents’ marriages, especially in the early years” (p. 257). This is because becoming a parent contributes to numerous changes in a couple’s relationship, changes that may be affecting both partners positively and negatively in the process (Ahlborg et al., 2008, p. 295). In addition, the birth of a child presents “a significant challenge for married couples, as their relationship undergoes a transition from a dyadic unit to a family of three or more” (Hirschberger et al., 2009, p. 402). According to Gottman and Gottman (2007),

a baby sets off seismic changes in marriage. Unfortunately, most of the time those changes are for the worse. In the year after the first baby arrives, 70 percent of wives experience a precipitous plummet in their marital satisfaction. (For the husband, the dissatisfaction usually kicks in later, as a reaction to his wife’s unhappiness). There are wide ranging reasons for this deep disgruntlement—lack of sleep, feeling overwhelmed and unappreciated, the awesome responsibility of caring for such a helpless little creature, juggling mothering with a job, economic stress and lack of time to oneself, among other things (p. 211).

It must be borne in mind, however,

that the birth of the first child is not the only factor responsible for the decline in marital satisfaction. It is possible that some of the decline in marital satisfaction is a function of time and erosion in the relationship that may characterize childless couples as well. Nevertheless, the period following childbirth is a time that merits special attention because the transition seems to introduce additional stress and strife into the couple relationship, which may accelerate the decline in marital satisfaction (Hirschberger et al., 2009, p. 402).

While the question of “who is going to take care of the baby?” is one of the many issues couples with newborns grapple with (Clulow, 1991, p. 264), a major area that experience change after a baby is born is sexuality. Ahlborg et al. (2008) found that after the first child is born, there is generally a decrease in closeness in both men and women and a decrease in sexual frequency within the first four years of the birth (p. 302).

Gottman and Gottman (2007) suggest that this is because couples no longer experience

each other's lives in the same consistently close way that they used to before the baby was born because time for conversation disappears. In addition, the increased emotional demands hamper intimacy, with men needing physical intimacy in order to feel close to their partner, while women are thinking about how unattractive they now look. Sexual intimacy for many new moms seems to be dried up, so they become less emotionally available to their men (pp. 25-26).

Clulow (1991) also suggests that the demands of a small baby can elicit unmet infantile desires in the mother as well as awaken separation anxiety in the parents (p. 263) resulting in a "child-centered marriage." In a child-centered marriage, children,

can become the great distraction – a convenient way to ignore your need for adult conversation or romance, or to sidestep marital problems that ought to be addressed....Parents who feel they missed important experiences or necessities in their own upbringing may be at special risk for having a child-centered marriage. These parents may be so focused on getting it right for their own offspring that everything else – including their marriage – takes a backseat to their children's needs. The sad irony is that in striving to create the perfect life for their children, these parents fail to provide what kids need most – a happy home (Gottman, Gottman, & De Claire, 2006, pp. 232-233).

The Solution

While research supports that children can affect the satisfaction of a marriage (Gottman & Gottman, 2007; Clulow, 1991), it has also "found that the experience of becoming a parent differed between couples. Some experience diminishing feelings of love toward their partner, more conflicts, impaired communication and less satisfaction with the relationship. Others experienced positive changes in the relationship during the transition to parenthood" ((Ahlborg et. al, 2008), p. 296). Even though marital satisfaction for most couples decline across the first 15 years of parenthood, this trend is eventually reversed with couples experiencing an improvement in their relationship as

they age and as children leave the home. Interestingly, though, marriages that survive to old age are likely to have started out much stronger than marriages that were dissolved along the way (Hirschberger et al., 2009, pp. 413-414).

Therefore, in balancing marriage and parenting, couples need to “remember that children will consume all the time you give them and still ask for more. It is your job to discern how much is enough and enforce the difference” (Larson, 2003, p. 122). In addition, Hirschberger et al. (2009) suggest that one of the strongest predictors of a relationship breakup over a period of 8 years was fathers’ initial dyadic adjustment, since a husband’s care-giving serves as a significant buffer against new mothers’ depression and relationship dissatisfaction (p. 415). Hence, as you try to balance marriage, work and parenting, with all its challenges, stresses and strong emotions, it is important for you to work together as a team and stay connected. This connection can be facilitated by focusing on your marital friendship, involving dad in baby care, letting dad be baby’s playmate, carving out time for the two of you, being sensitive to dad’s needs, and giving mom a break (Gottman & Silver, 1999, pp. 213-216).

Summary

Research (Lebow, 2005; Snyder & Whisman, 2003) has consistently identified marital distress as having major consequences on marriage relationships, with a profound effect on a couple’s marital (Gottman & Silver, 1994, p. 29; Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 3) and physical health (Whisman, 1999).

On the other hand, major factors that have been identified as relating to marital satisfaction within the literature are effective communication (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005, pp. 409-410; Stanley et al., 2002, p. 660), a sense of “we-ness” between husband and

wife” (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 190; Simmons et al., 2005, pp. 934-935), the couples’ ability to resolve conflicts between each other (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p.129; Gottman & Declaire, 2001, p. 209; Simmons et al., 2005, p. 935), the level of satisfaction with one’s sexual relationship (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 200; Larson, 2003, p. 147; Litzinger & Gordon, 2005, p. 412), the level of agreement by a husband and wife in managing finance (Dakin & Wampler, 2008, pp. 301-302; Gottman & Stanley, 1999, pp.197-198), and effective balancing of a marriage and parenting (Larson, 2003, p. 122; Gottman & Silver, 1999, pp. 213-216).

Therefore, in an effort to improve one’s marital satisfaction, it is important to note that “sharing life with another whom you have committed to loving for a life time is a most challenging journey and requires a substantial skill set to do it well (Talmadge & Talmadge, p. 7).

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSES OF MARITAL ISSUES WITHIN THE OTTAWA SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Introduction

This chapter presents the statistical analysis of the data gathered from this research study, which studied marital satisfaction among couples from the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church. The information presented includes demographic information, the results for each scale on the research questionnaire, and a strategy for improving marital satisfaction among couples.

Sample

I selected a sample of twelve couples through personal contact as well as by distributing flyers that described the nature of the project. Twelve couples were selected for the study within a congregation of approximately 500 members, due to the fact that only these individuals were willing and available to participate in the study. Although the membership of the church is approximately 500 (on record), only approximately 350 attend church on a regular basis. Of the 350 who attend regularly, approximately 60 are single university students who became members of the church when they moved to the city to pursue higher education. Another 60 or more are youth who are originally from the church and another 150 are singles, including the separated, divorced, widows,

widowers, and those who never married. Of the remaining 80 members who are married, approximately 30 have non-Adventist spouses; consequently, only 50 couples remained as a target group from which to choose the sample. Of these 50 couples, twelve were willing to participate, with both spouses being willing to do so. There were, of course, other individuals who wanted to participate in the study, but because their spouse was reluctant to do so, they were not permitted to since the study required that both partners participate.

The Instrument

Among the numerous assessment tools that can be used for assessing the level of marital satisfaction in a marriage, Lebow (2005, p. 40), a psychologist and family therapist, recommends the Marital Satisfaction Inventory Revised (MSI-R) as one of the most “useful, reliable and well validated” instrument available in assessing a couple’s marital satisfaction level.

Douglas K. Snyder developed the MSI-R with the purpose of “identifying the nature and extent of relationship distress with couples considering or beginning conjoint therapy” (1997, p. 1). The MSI-R is, therefore, a “self-reported measure that identifies, separately for each partner in a relationship, the nature and extent of distress along several key dimensions of their relationship via their responses of “True” or “False” to each of 150 MSI-R inventory items” (Snyder, 1997, p. 1) that generally requires approximately 25 minutes to be administered.

The questionnaire solicited information using (a) ten demographic questions (gender, age, educational level, occupation, ethnicity, duration of current marriage,

number of previous marriages or significant relationships, number of children, age of oldest and youngest child); (b) twenty items to assess consistency in responding to item content; (c) ten items to assess tendencies to distort the appraisal of their relationship in a socially desirable direction; (d) twenty-two items to measure overall dissatisfaction with their relationship; (e) thirteen items to measure dissatisfaction with the amount of affection and understanding expressed by their partner; (f) nineteen items to measure general ineffectiveness in resolving differences; (g) nineteen items to measure the level of intimidation and physical aggression experienced from the partner; (h) ten items that evaluates companionship as expressed in time shared in leisure activities; (i) ten items to measure relationship-discord regarding the management of finances; (j) eleven items to assess dissatisfaction with the frequency and quality of intercourse and other sexual activity; (k) twelve items to evaluate the respondent's advocacy for a traditional versus non-traditional orientation toward marital and parental gender role; (l) nine items to assess the level of disruption of relationships within the respondent's family of origin; (m) eleven items to assess the quality of the relationship between respondents and their children as well as parental concern regarding the emotional and behavioral well-being of one or more of the children; and (n) ten items to assess the extent of conflict between partners regarding child-rearing practices.

Each couple was given two "Marital Satisfaction Inventory Revised (MSI-R) questionnaires. Twelve men and twelve women who had been married for at least two years and whose ages were between 20 and 75 years old completed a total of twenty-four questionnaires. All twenty-four (100%) questionnaires were returned and were used for

various analyses. Demographic data relating to the respondents are illustrated in figures 1 through 6 and tables 1 through 6.

Due to copyright issues, the inventory could not be included. However, sample questions have been provided in Appendix C.

The Major Issues Affecting Marriages Within the Ottawa Church

In an effort to identify the major issues affecting marriages within the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist church, the Marital Satisfaction Inventory Revised (MSI-R) was utilized. As is represented in Tables 1 to 4 below, twelve couples ages 20 to 75 years old completed a total of twenty-four questionnaires with all twenty-four (100%) returned. Of the twelve males who participated in the study, two were in their twenties, two were in their thirties, three were in their forties, two were in their fifties, two were in their sixties, and one was in his seventies. Of the twelve females who participated, two were in their twenties, two were in their thirties, three were in their forties, three were in their fifties, one was in her sixties, and one was in her seventies. Regarding ethnicity, of the twelve males, eleven are African-Canadian and one, Caucasian. Of the twelve females, ten are African-Canadian and two, Caucasian. Ten of the twelve couples are parents and thus, the two couples without children did not complete the parent-related questions on the questionnaire.

Table 1

Number of Respondents—Ages 20 to 75 Years

	Age					
Respondents (12 Couples)	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	70s
12 Males	2	2	3	2	2	1
12 Females	2	2	3	3	1	1

Table 2

Ethnicity of Respondents—Ages 20 to 75 Years

	Ethnicity	
Respondents (12 Couples)	African-Canadian	Caucasian
12 Males	11	1
12 Females	10	2

Table 3

Questionnaires Returned

Respondents	Percentage (Questionnaires Completed)
12 Couples	100

Table 4

Respondents with/without Children

Respondents	Couples with Children	Couples without children
12 Couples	10	2

Figures 1 and 2 below show the results of the survey on the thirteen scales of the MSI-R. Figure 1 represents the responses given by the wives while figure 2 represents the responses of the husbands.

In figure 1, seven females received moderate scores, one received a high score, and four received low scores on the Inconsistency (INC) scale. On the Conventionalization (CNV) scale, four females received moderate scores, five received high scores, and three received low scores. On the Global Distress (GDS) scale, 6 females received moderate scores, two females received high scores, and four females received low scores. On the Affective Communication (AFC) scale, five females received moderate scores, one female received a high score, and six females received low scores. Three females received moderate scores, two received high scores, and seven received low scores on the Problem-Solving Communication (PSC) scale. On the Aggression (AGG) scale, three females received moderate scores, two received high scores, and seven received low scores. On the Time Together (TTO) scale, five females received moderate scores, two received high scores, and five received low scores. Eight females received moderate scores, one received a high score, and three received low scores on the

Disagreement About Finances (FIN) scale. On the Sexual Dissatisfaction (SEX) scale, seven females received moderate scores, one received a high score, and four received low scores. On the Role Orientation (ROR) scale, four females received moderate scores, none received a high score, and eight received low scores. On the Family History of Distress (FAM) scale, six females receiving moderate scores, none received a high score, and six received low scores. Two females received moderate scores, none received a high score, and eight received low scores on the Dissatisfaction With Children (DSC) scale. On the Conflict Over Child Rearing (CCR) scale, two females received moderate scores, none received a high score, and eight received low scores.

In figure 2, three males received moderate scores, none received a high score, and nine received low scores on the Inconsistency (INC) scale. On the Conventionalization (CNV) scale, one male received a moderate score, five received high scores, and six received low scores. On the Global Distress (GDS) scale, seven males received moderate scores, one received a high score, and four received low scores. On the Affective Communication (AFC) scale, seven males received moderate scores, none received a high score, and six received low scores. Five males received moderate scores, two received high scores, and five received low scores on the Problem-Solving Communication (PSC) scale. On the Aggression (AGG) scale, four males received moderate scores, two received high scores, and 6 received low scores. The Time Together (TTO) scale had six males receiving moderate scores, two received high scores, and four received low scores. Nine males received moderate scores, one received a high score, and two received low scores on the Disagreement About Finances (FIN) scale. On the Sexual Dissatisfaction (SEX) scale, five males receiving moderate scores, one received a high

score, and six received low scores. On the Role Orientation (ROR) scale, five males received moderate scores, none received a high score, and seven received low scores. On the Family History of Distress (FAM) scale, seven males received moderate scores, one received a high score, and four received low scores. Three males received moderate scores, 2 received high scores, and five received low scores on the Dissatisfaction With Children (DSC) scale. On the Conflict Over Child Rearing (CCR) scale, three males received moderate scores, one received a high score, and six received low scores.

Figure 1. MSI-R Profile – Females

Figure 2. MSI-R Profile – **Males**

According to Snyder (1997), in interpreting the results of the survey, the following must be borne in mind regarding the MSI-R scales:

High scores on the INC scale suggest that the individual may have responded to inventory items in a random, careless, or non-reflective manner. Moderate scores on the other hand, may reflect mixed sentiments within specific relationship domains—for instance, beliefs that the partner doesn't fully enjoy sexual relations, but still has concerns for the respondent's sexual satisfaction.

Regarding the CNV scale, low scores suggest that those respondents' appraisals of their relationships are distorted in a negative direction, reflecting possible failure to attend to positive features of the relationship and heightened reactivity to negative qualities or events. Moderate scores reflect a level of idealistic distortion or sentimentality and often indicate a reluctance to take a more objective or critical view of relationship difficulties. On the other hand, high CNV scores reflect levels of

defensiveness and resistance to discussing relationship conflict. Such scores generally occur when the respondent is engaged in frantic denial of relationship difficulties in the face of the partner's unhappiness or threat to leave the relationship.

A GDS scale that has low scores reflects a strong commitment to the relationship. Moderate scores reflect significant levels of relationship conflict and indicate a need for relevant interventions aimed at improving the couple's interaction while reducing relationship distress. High GDS scores, on the other hand, reflect extensive relationship dissatisfaction, with conflicts likely being of long duration and being generalized across various areas of the couple's interaction.

Individuals who score low on the AFC scale describe their relationships as happy and fulfilling and their partner as loving and supportive. Individuals who receive moderate AFC scores describe their relationship as experiencing moderate distress regarding the amount of affection they receive from their partners. They often feel emotionally disconnected from their partners and may also feel unappreciated and misunderstood. High scores on the AFC scale indicate more extensive dissatisfaction with the amount of love and affection expressed in the relationship. Respondents with such scores often describe their partners as emotionally distant and uncaring, reluctant to share intimate feelings and unsupportive.

Individuals who obtained low scores on the PSC scale report very little disharmony in their relationship and are likely to be committed to resolving differences when they occur with reasonable effectiveness. Moderate PSC scores generally indicate a prolonged history of relationship difficulties, characterized by frequent arguments. Couples who obtain Moderate PSC scores are more likely to deal poorly with

disagreements that generally escalate into major conflicts whenever they occur. High scores on the PSC scale is an indication that these individuals have an extensive history of unresolved relationship conflict with frequent arguments. These long accumulated, unresolved differences usually serve as the catalyst for major conflicts even when minor disagreements occur.

Low scores on the AGG scale is characteristic of those individuals who describe an absence of physical aggression or intimidation by their partners beyond occasional screaming or yelling. Among individuals who obtain moderate AGG scores, nonphysical intimidation as well as low levels of physical aggression are likely and may include screaming or yelling, directing violence against an object, threats by the partner to hit or throw objects at the respondent, and grabbing or slapping the respondent. Individuals who obtain high scores on the AGG scale usually experience at least moderate levels of intimidation (threats of physical harm) as well as low levels of physical aggression (pushing, grabbing, or slapping).

Being good friends and fun to be with, as well as feeling satisfied with the time shared together in leisure activity is descriptive of partners of individuals who obtain low scores on the TTO scale. Moderate TTO scores generally indicate a lack of sufficient time for shared leisure activity rather than lack of common interest, while high TTO scores indicate concerns regarding lack of common interests or friends, as well as feeling emotionally distant from the partner.

Individuals obtaining low scores on the FIN scale report that finances constitute an area of relative agreement in their relationship. These individuals describe their partners as being good providers, generous and skilled in managing money. Moderate

scores, on the other hand, indicate that disagreements about finances are of significant concern for the couple, with arguments about money being frequent and differences between partners regarding financial priorities common. Individuals with high scores on the FIN scale report finances as a major source of relationship conflict with arguments in this domain being very intense.

Low scores on the SEX scale indicate a positive attitude toward the overall quality of the couple's sexual relationship with respondents describing their partners as sexually exciting and their sexual relationship as satisfying for both their partners and themselves. Moderate SEX scores indicate the presence of concerns regarding the sexual relationship with individuals expressing dissatisfaction with the frequency of both sexual relations and non-sexual expression of affection and intimacy. High scores on the SEX scale reflect extensive dissatisfaction with the sexual relationship and the frequency of sexual exchanges. These individuals are likely to describe their partners as uninterested or not caring about the sexual relationship, as well as their partner's not being sexually satisfying.

Low scores on the ROR scale reflect a highly traditional view toward marital and parental gender roles, emphasizing men's dominance in decision-making and as primary wage earners. Men who obtain low ROR scores tend to be less involved in house care or child rearing responsibilities. On the contrary, women who obtain low ROR scores tend to invest more in their roles as wives and mothers at home. Individuals, who obtain a moderate ROR score, indicate a greater flexibility in the sharing of traditional roles. Women with moderate scores are likely to engage themselves in out-of-the-home activities, with men being more willing to share decisions with their partners although

they may assert final authority in important decision. High ROR scores, on the other hand, indicate a less traditional view of marital and parental roles and decision-making, house care, and child-rearing responsibilities are likely to be shared more fully.

Low scores on the FAM scale reflect a history of satisfying relationships within the respondents' family of origin. Persons with moderate scores, on the other hand, report significant tensions in their families of origin and often describe conflicted relationships with their parents or siblings. High FAM scores, however, indicate extensive conflicts in the family of origin and individuals who obtain such scores commonly describe alienation from parents, siblings, or both. Such maladaptive relationship patterns in the family of origin can also influence the relationship satisfaction in the respondents' current relationship.

Individuals who obtain low scores on the DSC scale are generally satisfied with the relationship with their children. They describe themselves as being good parents and are also likely to be viewed the same way by their partners. Respondents who obtain moderate DSC scores indicate significant distress in their relationship with their children and may express disappointment with their children's behavior or dissatisfaction with the demands of child rearing. High DSC scores reflect greater levels of distress in the respondents' relationship with their children and the demands of child rearing are viewed as a major stressor that most likely contributes to stress in the couple's relationship.

Individuals who obtain low scores on the CCR scale describe the interaction with their partner regarding their children as a positive one. This low score indicates that both partners are likely to participate in child rearing activities and in reaching decisions regarding discipline and other children-related responsibilities. While Moderate scores on

the CCR scale indicate significant conflict between partners regarding the children, high CCR scores describe extensive conflict in the partners' interactions regarding their children.

Interpretation and Discussion

In an assessment of the data collected on the MSI-R, therefore, figure 3 below shows the major issues that are affecting couples in this sample. In figure 3, the survey revealed that Affective Communication (AFC), Problem- Solving Communication (PSC), Aggression (AGG), Time Together (TTO), Disagreement About Finances (FIN), Sexual Dissatisfaction (SEX), and Dissatisfaction With Children (DSC) were the issues affecting most couples.

On the AFC scale, eight couples received moderate scores, two received a high score, and two, a low score. On the PSC scale, 6 couples received a moderate score, while two received a high score, and four, a low score. Four couples received a moderate score on the AGG scale while three received a high score and five, a low score. On the TTO scale, six couples received a moderate score, four received a high score, and two received a low score. Nine couples received a moderate score on the FIN scale, three couples received a high score, and no couple receiving a low score. On the SEX scale six couples received a moderate score, three couples, a high score, and three couples, a low score. On the DSC scale, four couples received a moderate score, two couples, a high score, and four couples, a low score.

In other words, two couples were satisfied with the level of affection that is expressed towards each other within the relationship. On the other hand, a total of ten couples were experiencing dissatisfaction within the AFC domain, eight couples

described their relationship as experiencing moderate distress regarding the amount of affection they receive from their partners, while two couples indicate more extensive dissatisfaction with the amount of love and affection expressed in the relationship.

Within the PSC domain, only four of the twelve couples surveyed expressed the ability to resolve conflicts between each other. This means that only four couples were likely to be committed to resolving their differences when they occur and to be reasonably effective during the process. On the contrary, eight couples were experiencing dissatisfaction, with six being more likely to deal with disagreements poorly and two having an extensive history of unresolved relationship conflict with frequent arguments.

The AGG domain has five couples reporting an absence of intimidation and physical aggression being present in their relationship. seven couples on the other hand, were dissatisfied, with four couples experiencing nonphysical intimidation in their relationship as well as low levels of physical aggression. In addition, three couples experience at least moderate levels of intimidation (threats of physical harm) as well as low levels of physical aggression (pushing, grabbing, or slapping) within their marriage.

Within the TTO domain, only two of the twelve couples surveyed expressed satisfaction in sharing activities and time together, an indication that only two couples viewed their partners as good friends and fun to be with. On the contrary, ten couples were experiencing dissatisfaction with six experiencing a lack of sufficient time for shared leisure activity while four expressed concerns regarding lack of common interests or friends, as well as feeling emotionally distant from a partner.

In the FIN domain, none of the twelve couples surveyed expressed satisfaction on the level of agreement they had regarding managing finances. In other words, all twelve

couples were experiencing dissatisfaction, nine had significant disagreements about finances, and three found financial issues to be a major source of relationship conflict with very intense arguments at times.

Within the SEX domain, only three of the twelve couples surveyed were satisfied with the frequency and quality of intercourse and other sexual activities within their relationship. Nine couples, however, experienced dissatisfaction. Six expressed dissatisfaction with the frequency of both sexual relations and non-sexual expression of affection and intimacy, while three expressed dissatisfaction with the sexual relationship and the frequency of sexual exchanges.

Only four of the ten couples (two couples did not have children) expressed satisfaction in the quality of their relationship with their children in the DSC domain. In other words, these couples who have described themselves as good parents are also likely to be viewed in a similar way by their spouse. On the contrary, six of the ten couples were experiencing dissatisfaction, with four describing significant distress in their own relationship with their children, an issue that may also contribute to the distress in the couple's own relationship. In addition, two couples indicate greater levels of distress regarding their relationship with their children, reflecting a lack of closeness to their children, a scenario which further contributes to stress in the couple's own relationship.

Figure 3. MSI-R Profile: Major Areas of Couples' Dissatisfaction.

Therefore, the analyses of the data collected have identified these seven areas of marital dissatisfaction as being the major issues affecting couples of the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The Level of Marital Satisfaction Among Couples Within the Ottawa Church

Figures 4 to 6 and Tables 4 to five below, represent the level of marital satisfaction among the sample of couples within the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist church. In figure 4, four males and four females described their relationship as being satisfying (Low GDS Scores), seven males and six females whose relationships reflect significant levels of conflict, expressed dissatisfaction with their relationship (Moderate GDS Scores) and one male and two females experienced extensive relationship dissatisfaction, with conflicts being of a long duration (High GDS Scores). Eight males (33%) and eight females (33%) reported being dissatisfied with their relationship, while

four males (17%) and four females (17%), reported being satisfied, as illustrated in figures 4, 5 and table 5.

Figure 4. Male versus Female Level of Global Distress.

Figure 5. Male versus Female Level of Satisfaction.

Table 5

Male versus Female Level of Global Distress

Global Distress	Percentage
Satisfied Males	33
Dissatisfied Males	17
Satisfied Females	33
Dissatisfied Females	17

Since marital satisfaction is the subjective evaluation of one's experience in his/her marriage and since it takes both partners to influence one's satisfaction within a marriage (Lebow, 2005, p. 38), figures 6 and Table 6 below further indicate the level of marital satisfaction in this sample.

Of the twelve couples surveyed, only one couple (9 %) was satisfied with their relationship (Low GDS Scores). That is, only one couple viewed their partner as good friends, viewed their relationship as a major source of gratification, tended to have a high level of expression of affection towards each other, were able to resolve their differences when they occurred, and were viewed as good parents by their spouse.

On the contrary, eleven couples (91%) were dissatisfied with their relationship. Ten (83%) had a relationship that reflects significant levels of conflict (Moderate GDS Scores) and one (9%) experienced extensive relationship dissatisfaction (High GDS Scores) in their marriage.

Figure 6. Couples' Level of Global Distress

Table 6

Couples' Level of Global Distress

Global Distress	Percentage
Satisfied Relationship	9
Dissatisfied Relationship With PP	83
Dissatisfied Relationship With P	8

Marital Needs Among Couples within the Ottawa Church

Considering the fact that an individual is usually satisfied with his/her relationship when his/her relationship needs are met (Lebow, 2005, p. 38), the major areas of marital dissatisfaction among couples of the Ottawa church as seen in figure 3 have consequently been identified as being areas representing the marital needs among these couples. Hence, there is the need for a greater level of emotional intimacy—an expression of affection and understanding between couples—as expressed by the AFC scale. There is a need for more effective skills in resolving differences as expressed on the PSC scale. There is a

need for appropriate skills in reducing the level of intimidation or physical aggression, as expressed by the AGG scale. There is a need to improve the level of “friendship” reflected in behavioral intimacy on the TTO scale. There is a need for better money management skills in order to reduce the level of relationship discord regarding finance as expressed on the FIN scale. There is the need for an improvement in the frequency and quality of intercourse and other sexual activity in order to address sexual discontent as reflected on the SEX scale. There is the need for parenting skills to improve parent-child relationship, as well as to tackle child-rearing demands that are having a negative impact on the marriage as is expressed on the DSC scale.

Strategy for Improving Marital Satisfaction Among the Couples of the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church

With two of every three marriages ending in divorce (Gottman & Silver, 1994, p. 16) and with such a high level of marital dissatisfaction among couples from the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church, a marriage enrichment seminar will be utilized as a strategy to address these marital needs. The seminar will focus on equipping married couples and those engaged to be married with the skills necessary to enrich the marriage relationship as well as improve marital satisfaction among couples.

“The Art and Science of Love” workshop materials developed by John Gottman will be used as the teaching tool and will address issues relating to communication, problem solving, bonding, finance, parenting, and sexual intimacy. This workshop was chosen because of what Gottman has learned about what makes relationships work from studying and following over 3000 couples in over 30 years of research. According to the research (Gottman, 2006), a couple has to accomplish three things to make a relationship

last. The couple has to strengthen their friendship, work on the way they handle conflict in their relationship, and support each other's dream through the creating of shared meaning in the relationship.

The contents of the workshop cover the following areas:

1. The five basic questions

- How is your marriage/relationship doing?
- What makes relationships change, for better or for worse?
- If your relationship is in trouble, how can you turn it around?
- If your relationship is doing well, how can you ensure that your relationship will continue to grow?
- As your relationship improves, how can you make changes last?

2. Assessing your relationship

- Learn to recognize the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse and what to do if they are attacking your relationship/marriage.
- Identify your relationship's specific strengths and how to build on them.
- Learn about the effects of physiological flooding and how it may impede conflict resolution.
- Learn the small, easy steps that increase romance in your relationship.

3. Building a "Sound Relationship House"

- Learn how Love Maps provide a solid foundation for intimacy.
- Use the Fondness and Admiration System to renew respect and care for one another.
- Create an Emotional Bank Account that you can draw upon in times of stress.
- Develop your problem-solving skills, including the four techniques of effective conflict resolution: Softened Start-up, Accepting Influence, Repair Work, and De-escalation.
- Find out how you can make your dreams and aspirations come true for you, your partner, and your relationship.

Suffice to say, having God as the foundation of a couple's relationship (as is elaborated on in Ch. 2), an important factor that was not mentioned by Gottman is of critical importance to marital health and will, consequently, be added as an additional

topic during the workshop. Therefore, in light of current research, that found that couples who attend church regularly are less likely to divorce than couples who seldom do (CNSNews.com), it is safe to conclude that “except the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it” (Ps 127: 1). Thus, the workshop is designed to teach what successful couples do to foster romance and harmony in their relationships. During the workshop, couples will learn how to make God central in their relationship, build fondness, admiration, and closeness as a couple, as well as learning important communication skills in an effort to be able to manage conflict better.

Figure 7 below illustrates how the intervention instrument was used to address the seven deficiencies uncovered by the assessment instrument during the study.

Seven Factors	Seven Seminar Topics
Affective Communication (AFC)	Enhance Your Love Maps Nurture Your Fondness and Admiration
Problem-Solving Communication (PSC)	Solve Your Solvable Problem Overcome Gridlock
Aggression (AGG)	Let Your Partner Influence You
Time Together (TTO)	Turn Towards Each Other Instead Of Away
Disagreement About Finances (FIN)	Create Shared Meaning
Sexual Dissatisfaction (SEX)	Let Your Partner Influence You Create Shared Meaning
Dissatisfaction with Children (DSC)	Solve Your Solvable Problem

Figure 7. Parallels between the Seven Factors and the seven seminar topics.

As is illustrated in figure7 above, Affective Communication issues, which indicate a need for a greater level of emotional intimacy—an expression of affection and understanding between couples, were addressed through the Enhance Your Love Maps and Nurture Your Fondness and Admiration presentations. This is because these two presentations seek to help couples learn about each other’s likes, dislikes, wishes, hopes, and dreams, as well as learning how to focus more on a partner’s positive qualities—strategies that will help in nurturing the friendship and closeness between couples.

Problem Solving Communication issues, which involves couples working together to resolve their differences, were addressed by the Solve Your Solvable Problem

and Overcome Gridlock presentations. This is because the two presentations provide effective skills in how to resolve or deal with particular marital problems.

The issue of Aggression, which is mainly fueled by power and control, was addressed through the Let Your Partner Influence You presentation. The presentation sought to teach couples how to share power through understanding the feelings that make a person refuse to compromise, as well as creating a shared understanding of others' values, attitudes, and interest.

The Time Together factor, which involves close friendship between individuals, was addressed by the Turn Towards Each Other Instead Of Away presentation. The main aim in this presentation is to teach couples how to connect/re-connect with one's partner through frequent interaction.

The Disagreement About Finances factor, which involves working together in managing finances, was addressed through the Create Shared meaning presentation—learning how to make your dreams and aspirations come through for you, your partner and your relationship. This is because “money is a metaphorical currency for power, control, acknowledgment, self-worth, competence, caring, security, commitment and feeling loved and accepted” (Shapiro, 2007, p. 290).

Let Your Partner Influence You and Create Shared Meaning presentations were utilized to address the Sexual Dissatisfaction factor, which involves frequent and quality sexual activities between individuals. The presentations, therefore, addressed power struggle issues, since “unresolved power problems usually end up in the bedroom (Larson, 2003, p. 84). In addition, couples were taught how to create shared meaning through connection rituals—a process that nurtures connection and sexual intimacy.

Dissatisfaction with Children, which involves both individuals dealing effectively with their child-rearing demands so that these demands do not negatively affect the marriage, was addressed through the Solve Your Solvable Problem. The presentation sought to equip couples with the necessary problem-solving skills surrounding child-rearing demands that have the potential of negatively impacting the marriage.

Since this workshop was not able to address in-depth financial management and parenting issues, financial seminars on money management as well as parenting seminars on effective parenting skills are recommended in order to provide couples with the appropriate skills.

Seminar Objectives

Upon completion of this seminar, individuals would have been equipped with the relevant skills to strengthen their friendship, manage their conflicts effectively, and create shared meaning in their relationship. This will consequently lead to the couples' being able to communicate more effectively with their spouse, being able to treat each other as best friends, improve the quality of their sexual intimacy, being able to resolve conflicts amicably, parent their children effectively, and have improved marital satisfaction.

Assessment of Desired Outcome

The following strategies will be used to assess the desired outcome of the Seminar.

1. Pre-seminar assessment: Have individuals share their knowledge on each of the topics to be discussed prior to the seminar presentation.

2. Post-Seminar Assessment: Have individual couples share what they have learned and how this has changed their relationships. This will be done verbally, as well as in a written form.

Assessment Instrument

The “Marital Satisfaction” Seminar evaluation form in figure 7 will be used at the end of the seminar to assess the effectiveness of the intervention.

**Marital Satisfaction Seminar
Evaluation Form**

1. List at least three things you have learned from the seminar.

2. Have any of your views in any of the subject areas changed as a result of the seminar? (If yes, what are they and what are your views now?) Yes () No ()

3. Is there a change in your relationship as a result of this seminar? (If yes, what are the changes?) Yes () No ()

4. Do you feel your marriage has been enriched as a result of this seminar? (If yes, give reasons). Yes () No ()

5. Are you committed to the nurturing of the relationship through the practicing of those things learned in the seminar? Yes () No ()

Comments:

Figure 8. Marital Satisfaction Seminar Evaluation Form.

Seminar Format

The seminar format followed the outline in figure 8 below.

Ice breaker	5 Min.	The intention was to get the participants to laugh, relax and be prepared for the seminar.
Knowledge share	15 Min	Individuals shared their knowledge, views, and beliefs on the subject for discussion (Pre-seminar assessment).
Presentation	50 Min.	Research information on each subject was shared in a PowerPoint presentation. Recommendations were made as it relates to the things couples need to do in order to improve their relationship in this area of their marriage.
Question & Answer	20 Min	The seminar was followed by a question and answer period.

Figure 9. Schedule.

Resources That were Required

The seminar was held in the church sanctuary and resources such as a laptop computer, a projector, a public address system, and refreshments for the last session of the seminar were required.

Key Players That Helped

The family life department, the audio/visual department, and the hospitality department were all key players that helped with this intervention plan. The family life department sponsored the event and the audio/visual department provided the necessary technological support such as the sound, projector, and other relevant audio and video equipment. The hospitality department provided refreshments, as well as creating the ambiance necessary for the seminar.

How Target Audience was Recruited to Participate or Attend

With the help of the church's family life department, the event was advertised on the church's website, through the distribution of flyers, and by numerous announcements during the worship services of the church. Participants consequently responded to the recruiting process by telephone and personal contact with me.

Time/Event Sequence

The time/event sequence for this intervention plan was twice per week for three weekends with each presentation lasting approximately ninety minutes. Consequently, the seminar was conducted three consecutive Fridays from 7:15 – 8:45 pm and three consecutive Saturday afternoons. On the first and third Saturdays, the seminar was conducted from 5:15 – 6:45 pm and on the second Saturday, two presentations were done from 5:00 – 7:30 pm. Contact information for couple and family therapy professionals were provided to all the seminar participants so that those who required such services could have it.

Post-seminar Assessment Results

The following responses regarding the effectiveness of the intervention were received through the use of the post-seminar assessment (fig. 7). One of the five questions sought to ascertain the level of understanding by each participant on the subject, while the other four assessed the participants' attitude to their marriage. Consequently, responses to four of the five are reported here.

In response to question 2, "Have any of your views in any of the subject areas changed as a result of the seminar?" thirteen of the fifteen participants who completed the assessment form said, "Yes." In response to question 3, "Is there a change in your relationship as a result of this seminar?" fourteen of the fifteen participants who completed the assessment form said, "Yes." In response to question 4, "Do you feel your marriage has been enriched as a result of this seminar?" all fifteen participants who completed the assessment form said, "Yes," and in response to question 5, "Are you committed to the nurturing of the relationship through the practicing of those things learned in the seminar?" all fifteen participants who completed the assessment form said, "Yes." In addition, four of the fifteen participants recommended that the seminar be conducted in other churches as well as repeated at the Ottawa Church location in the future.

Summary

In summary, the major issues that were found to contribute to couples' marital satisfaction were Affective Communication (AFC), which involves expressions of affection and understanding with each other; Problem- Solving Communication (PSC), which involves couples working together to resolve their differences; Aggression (AGG),

which involves the absence of intimidation and or physical aggression in the relationship; Time Together (TTO), which involves close friendship between individuals; Disagreement About Finances (FIN), which involves working together in managing finances; Sexual Dissatisfaction (SEX) which involves frequency and quality of sexual activities between individuals; as well as Dissatisfaction With Children (DSC), which involves both individuals dealing effectively with their child rearing demands so that these demands do not negatively affect the marriage.

However, since eleven of twelve couples from the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church who were surveyed were dissatisfied with their marriage, the intervention plan developed sought to address the need of improving marital satisfaction among these couples.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the research project, including the general purpose, a theological reflection, overview of related literature, description of the population sample, instrumentation, and discussion of finding. Following this are conclusions, implications and recommendations.

Summary

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify marital satisfaction factors for the married couples of the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church. In addition, this study investigated differences between marital satisfaction levels of husbands and wives within each marriage.

Theological Reflection

With every civilized society regarding marriage as a sacred and honorable institution (Smith & Smith, 2002, p. 5) and with God creating the first couple (Gen 2: 18-24) and gifting them with a happy, healthy and satisfied relationship (Smalley, 2004, p.

37), the marriage institution comes endorsed as being “very good” (Gen 1:31) and divinely willed (Leupold, 1942, p. 135) by an all-knowing God.

The marriage institution, therefore, emerged through God’s creation of man from the dust of the earth (Gen 2:7), then woman from the rib of the man (Gen 2:21-22), and then joining both together as one (Mk 10:9). Since woman was made from the side of man, rather than his head or from his feet, it signifies equality of the sexes as well as the need for the man to protect and love his wife (Spence & Exell, 1975, p. 54). It is within this context that Adam’s response, “This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23), becomes so significant because it expresses the most intimate kinship that two beings can share in their relationship. Hence, this is why a man should leave his father and mother and become one flesh with his wife (Gen 2: 24), a process that “involves the complete identification of one personality with the other in a community of interests and pursuits, a union consummated in intercourse” (Leupold, 1942, p. 137).

Accepting God as the foundation of one’s marriage—which includes the fact that God who has instituted marriage is interested in the happiness and well-being of those who enter there in—is the first and most important factor in having a satisfied marital relationship.

A second factor in improving marital satisfaction is to nurture the marriage through focused and deliberate attention. In other words, those who enter marriage should give priority to nurturing the “we-ness” in their relationship, a concept referred to in Ephesians 5:31 as “one flesh.” Ephesians 5:21-23 has often been used as a point of instruction for couples in nurturing their relationship, though this passage and its interpretation have generated much debate, especially that of v. 22.

One school of thought is that the author of Ephesians was “a man of his day, shaped by the patriarchal attitudes of Greco-Roman, Jewish cultures toward women” (Reid, 2008, p. 20) and thus, is reflecting such cultural norms in his writings. The Egalitarians, proponents of this view suggest, therefore, that one embraces a theology of equality and mutual submission (Reid, 2008, p. 22) put forward in Ephesians 5:21 by Paul.

A second view calls on husbands to “love” their wives and wives to “respect” their husbands. This view purports that when a husband feels disrespected, his natural tendency is to react in ways that feel unloving to his wife, while when a wife feels unloved by her husband, she has a natural tendency to react in ways that feel disrespectful to him (Eggerichs, 2004, p. 16). In other words, this love and respect connection is a key factor in the existence of a healthy marriage as well as the key to any problem that any marriage may encounter.

The “we-ness” view therefore, serves as a response to the egalitarian and the “love” and “respect” views and indicates a “oneness and intimacy in the total relationship of the whole person of the husband to the whole person of the wife, a harmony and union with each other in all things” (Davidson, 2007, p. 47). Hence, irrespective of how the writings of Ephesians 5:21-33 may be interpreted, the important thing is that the mindset of “we-ness” (one flesh) in marriage is what keeps couples bonded as opposed to the mindset of “separateness,” which has the potential of adding to the divorce statistics (Seider et al., 2009).

According to 1 Corinthians 7:3 and Song of Solomon 4, nurturing sexual intimacy is also a major factor that contributes to a couple’s marital satisfaction. Scripture paints

the picture of sex and sexuality as a pleasurable part of life and should not be viewed “as something intrinsically bad” (Samplly, 2002, p. 873). Consequently, when a man and his wife are naked and “unashamed” (Gen 2:25), they have come to know one another fully and have accepted each other completely. It is within this context that Paul advises, “The husband should fulfill his wife’s sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband’s needs” (1 Cor 7: 3, NLT). In addition, the Song of Solomon, which is a poetic work concerned with love and lovers as well as a biblical book that gives testimony to joy in sex, is very insightful in its instruction regarding the nurturing of sexual intimacy within marriage. It is within this context, therefore, that sex plays such a pivotal role in marital well-being, with prolonged abstinence having the potential of frustrating and withering the marriage relationship (Short, 1953, p. 78).

When couples allow God to be the foundation of their marriage by embracing the fact that God who has instituted marriage is interested in the happiness and well-being of their relationship and when couples nurture their marriage through focused and deliberate attention as well as by nurturing sexual intimacy within their relationship, their marital satisfaction will ultimately be improved.

Overview of Related Literature

The literature review section was divided into two sections. The first section discussed marital distress and its implication on marital, mental and physical health. The second section discusses factors that are identified as relating to marital satisfaction in the literature.

One of the recurring questions within research literature on marriage is, “What distinguishes a happy marriage from one that is unhappy?” (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989, p.

47). Research (Lebow, 2005, p. 38; Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 4) consistently shows that more people seek therapy for marital issues than for any other type of issue. In addition, unhappy marriages have also been linked with the “onset, co-occurrence, and course of mental and physical health problems in adults” (Snyder & Whisman, 2003, p. 3).

Among the many issues that have been identified as impacting a couple’s marital health are “emotional disengagement, power struggles, problem-solving and communication difficulties, jealousy and extrarelational involvements, value and role conflicts, sexual dissatisfaction, and violence” (Gurman & Fraenkel, 2002, p. 201).

In regards to the effects of an unhappy marriage on one’s physical health, Whisman (1999) has found a strong association between marital distress and psychiatric disorders, in general, as well as in relation to each of the 15 major groups of psychiatric disorders, in particular. Furthermore, problems in intimate relationships were found to have “substantial negative impact on one’s mood, appetite, sleep and other functioning” (Snyder & Whisman, 2003, p. 7). Although an unhappy marriage has a profound impact on one’s marital and physical health, research has shown that to young adult women and men, having a satisfying marriage or relationship was the single most important goal in life (Snyder & Whisman, 2003), p.3).

Therefore, major factors that have been identified as relating to marital satisfaction are effective communication (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005, pp. 409-410; Stanly et al., 2002, p. 660), a sense of “we-ness” between husband and wife” (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 190; Simmons et al., 2005, pp. 934-935), the couples’ ability to resolve conflicts between each other (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 129; Gottman & Declaire, 2001, p. 209; Simmons et al., 2005, p. 935), the level of satisfaction with one’s sexual relationship (Gottman &

Silver, 1999, p. 200; Larson, 2003, p. 147; Litzinger & Gordon, 2005 p. 412); the level of agreement by a husband and wife in managing finances (Dakin & Wampler, 2008, pp. 301-302; Gottman & Stanley, 1999, pp.197-198) and effective balancing of marriage and parenting (Larson, 2003, p. 122; Gottman & Silver, 1999, pp. 213-216).

Among the many tools that have been used to measure the level of distress in a marriage is the Marital Satisfaction Inventory – Revised (MSI-R). The MSI-R, consists of a global distress measure and subscales assessing affective communication, problem solving communication, aggression, time together, disagreement about finances, sexual dissatisfaction, role orientation, family history of distress, dissatisfaction with children, and conflict over child rearing.

According to Litzinger and Gordon (2005), “effective communication has a central component to marital satisfaction” (pp. 409-410). Hence, the active listening approach to a couple’s communication is helpful in avoiding the typical dangers to good communication, such as escalation, invalidation and withdrawal (Hafen & Crane, 2003, p. 8). In addition, Gottman and DeClaire (2001) suggest that one major approach to dealing with the communication problem in marriage is for individuals to improve their emotional connection with each other (p. 229).

In dealing with power struggle issues, a University of California, Berkeley research (Seider et al., 2009) has found that couples who used pronouns such as “we,” “our,” and “us” behaved more positively toward one another and showed less physiological stress than couples who emphasized their “separateness” by using pronouns such as “I,” “me,” and “you” when interacting in their marriage. We-focus marriages are, therefore, associated with more positive, effective, and mutually satisfying problem

solutions (Simmons et al., 2005, pp. 934-935). Hence, in we-focus marriages, having an equal say in making important decisions enhances the relationship since “sharing power is one of the foundations of intimacy” (Larson, 2003, p. 84).

Regarding problem solving in marriage, research (Gottman & Silver, 1999) has found that all marital conflicts fall under one of two categories—resolvable or perpetual problems (p. 129). It is for this reason that Gottman and Silver (1999) suggest that the best way to cope effectively with either kind of problem is to communicate basic acceptance of your partner’s personality (p. 149). Softening your start up, learning to make and receive repair attempts, soothing yourself and each other, compromising, and being tolerant of each other’s faults are five steps that have been recommended in dealing effectively with marital conflicts (Gottman & Silver, 1999, pp. 165-185). Added to this is focusing “less on the conflict itself and more on the dreams, goals, or wishes that underlie each person’s fixed position within that struggle” (Gottman & DeClaire, 2001, p. 209).

Litzinger and Gordon (2005) found that satisfaction with one’s sexual relationship as it relates to sexual intimacy and marital satisfaction also plays a vital role in creating and maintaining a happy marriage (p. 410). Consequently, factors such as work, length of marriage, children, sexual dysfunction, and internet infidelity have all been identified as having correlations on marital satisfaction (Cheung et al., 2008; Henline & Howard, 2008; Carnes & Carnes, 2010; Gonyea, 2004). With these factors in mind, however, research (Schnarch, 2002, p. 16; Cheung et al., 2008, p.131; Davis, 2003, p. 4) suggests that at the heart of most sexual intimacy problems is the issue of “low sexual desire.” Consequently, in an attempt to address the issue of improving sexual intimacy in marriage, it must be borne in mind that sexuality is a couple and not an individual

experience and must be addressed by both parties involved (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2003, p. 29).

According to Dakin and Wampler (2008), disagreement over finances has been ranked among the top reasons contributing to divorce and couples who are dissatisfied with their financial situation usually consider their entire relationship a failure (p. 300). Gottman and Silver (1999), however, suggest that money conflicts are often “evidence of a perpetual issue, since money is symbolic of many emotional needs—such as for security and power—and goes to the core of our individual value system” (p. 194). Consequently, couples who argue about money are really arguing about how to manage the money they have (Dakin & Wampler, 2008, pp. 301-302). It is for this reason that Gottman and Stanley (1999) recommend that couples work together as a team, in order to manage their financial issues, expressing their concerns, needs, and fantasies to each other as they develop a plan of how to manage their money (p. 197).

Regarding parental issues and its relation to marital satisfaction, research (Clulow, 1991; Ahlborg et al., 2008; Gottman & Gottman, 2007, p. 16) has found a correlation between the arrival of a newborn and a couple’s marital satisfaction. One of the reasons is that becoming a parent contributes to numerous changes in a couple’s relationship, changes that may be both positively and negatively affecting both partners in the process (Ahlborg et al., 2008, p. 295). In balancing marriage and parenting, therefore, it is important to work together as a team and stay connected by focusing on the marital friendship.

Sampling

I reached the couples for this study through personal contact as well as by

distributing flyers that described the nature of the project. A total of twenty-four “Marital Satisfaction Inventory Revised (MSI–R) questionnaires were given out to twelve couples (six males and six females), who participated in the study, with all twenty-four questionnaires being returned. The ages of the participants who were married for at least two years ranged between 20 and 75. Ten of the twelve couples were parents, while two were not.

Instrumentation

This was an exploratory study that sought to discover factors that were important to the marital satisfaction of couples from the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church. Using the Marital Satisfaction Inventory Revised (MSI–R) questionnaire, which seeks to identify the nature and extent of relationship distress in a couple’s relationship, ten major factors that were related to marital satisfaction were identified. These ten factors included the level of the couple’s affection for each other, the couple’s ability to resolve conflicts between each other, the level of intimidation and physical aggression that were present in the couple’s relationship, the couple’s satisfaction level in sharing activities and time together, the level of agreement between the husband and wife in managing finances, the level of a couple’s sexual satisfaction, the couple’s attitude toward marital and parental gender roles, the couple’s family dynamics in their family of origin, the couple’s level of satisfaction in the quality of their relationship with their children, and the level of agreement between the husband and wife regarding child-rearing principles. In addition, the Marital Satisfaction Inventory Revised (MSI–R) consisted of two validity scales (Inconsistency and Conventionalization) and one global affective scale (Global Distress), which is used to assess overall dissatisfaction with the relationship.

The analysis of the data has yielded seven interpretable factors. These factors were Affective Communication, Problem- Solving Communication, Aggression, Time Together, Disagreement About Finances, Sexual Dissatisfaction, and Dissatisfaction With Children. These seven factors appeared to correspond with some of the major factors that were originally identified through the review of the literature.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study are summarized according to the seven major areas within which couples were dissatisfied, as well as in regards to the Global Distress scale that is used to assess individuals' overall dissatisfaction with the relationship.

Affective Communication (AFC)

Of the twelve couples surveyed, only two were satisfied with the level of affection that is expressed towards each other within the relationship. In other words, two of twelve couples described their relationship as happy and fulfilling while the other ten experience emotional distance from his/her partner within the marriage. In addressing this issue, couples need to be reconnected emotionally with each other and consequently, need to be helped in strengthening their abilities to appreciate and value each other, as well as in falling in love with each other again.

Problem-Solving Communication (PSC)

Only four of the twelve couples surveyed expressed the ability to resolve conflicts between each other. This means that only four couples were likely to be committed to resolving their differences when they occur and to be reasonably effective during the process, while eight couples were more likely to deal poorly with their relationship

difficulties, consequently resulting in major conflicts. It is of critical importance, therefore, for couples to be provided with the appropriate tools on how to deal effectively with conflict. Such tools could be provided through family life seminars that focus on conflict management.

Aggression (AGG)

Of the twelve couples surveyed, only five reported the absence of intimidation and physical aggression in their relationship. On the other hand, seven couples reported having some form of aggression in their marriage and hence, experienced some form of verbal or physical aggression within their relationship. According to Thoennes & Tjaden (2000), one in four women (25 %) has experienced domestic violence in her life time, but in this study one in two (50 %) women experienced some form of violence, which represents a percentage of domestic violence/abuse that is much higher than national averages and is unacceptable, particularly within a Christian context (Drumm, Popescu, Hopkins, & Spady, 2007). Consequently, these findings should intensify the effort to promote training and education in the development of prevention strategies, as well as for caring for victims of spousal abuse. This is because, generally, at the heart of the aggressive relationship there lies a control issue (Stith, 2000, p. 1) which needs to be addressed in order to offer ways for individuals to engage in healthier behaviors that do not violate others.

Time Together (TTO)

Only two of the twelve couples surveyed expressed satisfaction in the activities and time together that they share. An indication that only two couples viewed their

partners as good friends and fun to be with, as opposed to the other ten who expressed a feeling of isolation and alienation from their spouse. This further suggests that couples need to be encouraged to make their relationship a priority—more important than careers, children, hobbies, community involvement, and personal pursuits. Furthermore, the absence of time together can result in emotional disconnection. On the contrary, when couples spend time together, they have a chance to talk. When they talk, they are communicating. When they communicate, they use their listening and understanding skills to share with each other their desires, feelings, dreams, and aspirations, which further enhances emotional connection and deepens a couple's love.

Disagreement About Finances (FIN)

None of the twelve couples surveyed expressed satisfaction on the level of agreement they had regarding managing finances. In other words, all twelve couples expressed that disagreement about finances were of significant concern for them. This finding is an indication that the couples need to be taught how to manage their finances. Seminars on financial management should, therefore, be developed and taught as a way of equipping couples on how to manage their money, since money is one of the major issues that couples generally argue about.

Sexual Dissatisfaction (SEX)

Of the twelve couples surveyed, only three were satisfied with the frequency and quality of intercourse and other sexual activities within their relationship, while nine expressed concerns regarding the sexual relationship and its role as a significant source of relationship dissatisfaction. Since sex is such an important factor in a marriage, a factor

that enhances bonding and closeness in a relationship, couples need to be educated on the importance of sex in marriage and the dynamics that may surround it. Too often, as Christians, we shy away from addressing this important issue that has been one of the major issues that couples argue about in marriage. Consequently, a seminar/workshop for couples on the subject of human sexuality is critically important, especially in light of this current finding.

Dissatisfaction with Children (DSC)

Only four of the ten couples (two couples did not have children) expressed satisfaction in the quality of the relationship with their children. In other words, these couples who have described themselves as good parents are also likely to be viewed in a similar way by their spouse. On the contrary, six of the ten couples expressed significant dissatisfaction in the relationship with their children, an issue that may contribute to further stress in the couples' own relationship. In light of this finding, it is necessary to conduct parenting seminars for couples as a way of providing them with the relevant parenting skills they need, in order to reduce the stress level and frustration that may accompany the task of parenting their children on a day-to-day basis.

Global Distress (GDS)

Regarding the overall dissatisfaction with the relationship, of the twelve couples who were surveyed, only one couple was satisfied with their marriage. In other words, only one couple described their relationship as satisfying and viewed their partner as good friends. In addition, only one couple viewed their relationship as a major source of gratification, while eleven couples expressed relationship dissatisfaction with significant levels of relationship conflicts being present within the marriage. Compared to the

dissatisfied couples, the satisfied couple tended to have a higher level of expression of affection towards each other, were better able to resolve their differences when they occurred, and are viewed as good parents by their spouse.

In spite of the small sample size in this study, the findings show the extent to which couples are unequipped to handle the most important earthly relationship—the one that is the most powerful metaphor for the relationship between Christ and His church. If these findings are typical of couples in trouble (and I think they are), then, as a Christian organization, there needs to be an urgent response, since these marital issues have the potential of impacting negatively, not only the couples, but also their children and their children's children.

Conclusions

In summary, the seven major factors that appeared to be areas of concern regarding marital satisfaction for couples of the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist church were Affective Communication (AFC), which involves expressions of affection and understanding with each other; Problem- Solving Communication (PSC), which involves couples working together to resolve their differences; Aggression (AGG), which involves the absence of intimidation and or physical aggression in the relationship; Time Together (TTO), which involves close friendship between individuals; Disagreement About Finances (FIN), which involves working together in managing finances; Sexual Dissatisfaction (SEX) which involves frequent and quality sexual activities between individuals; as well as Dissatisfaction With Children (DSC), which involves both individuals dealing effectively with their child rearing demands so that these demands do not negatively affect the marriage.

Implications

When providing help (therapy or psycho-education) for couples of the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist church, couples may benefit greatly from an approach that includes the following interventions: (1) encouraging each spouse to talk and practice expressions of affection in ways that communicate love to his or her partner; (2) having couples develop conflict resolution skills to assist them in working together to resolve their differences; (3) exploring possible causes of intimidation and or physical aggression in the relationship in an attempt to rid the relationship of such aggression; (4) exploring individual's preference in leisure activities, as well as encouraging couples to spend time regularly with each other; (5) encouraging couples to develop a financial plan in order to work together in managing finances; (6) providing an opportunity to talk about sexual interaction, with each spouse exploring his or her sexual inhibitions, fantasies and desires; and (7) exploring the dynamics surrounding parenting issues in preparation for meeting the stresses that are related to having children, as well as parenting them.

On a larger scale, these findings may be an indication of the level of dissatisfaction that exists within the membership of the Seventh-day Adventist church and consequently, demands urgent attention from the Church's Administration. In spite of the fact that there exists a family ministry department at most levels of the organization, much more needs to be done in effecting the necessary changes that are urgently needed in marital relationships within Seventh-day Adventist Congregations.

Since the society is a by-product of the family and since the family is the basic unit of society, the church needs to invest more in the prevention of marital break-ups, as well as in helping families heal as we seek to demonstrate to the rest of society God's

amazing love. It is within this context that Ellen White (1952) said, “The greatest evidence of the power of Christianity that can be presented to the world is a well-ordered, well-disciplined family. This will recommend the truth as nothing else can, for it is a living witness of its practical power upon the heart” (p. 32). Furthermore, “One well-ordered, well-disciplined family tells more in behalf of Christianity than all the sermons that can be preached” (White, 1952, p. 32).

As a church, therefore, we need to approach family ministry in the same way we approach evangelism—with urgency and importance and invest just as much or even more within this ministry, since healthy marriages generally result in healthy families and healthy families generally result in healthy churches, which will, in turn, serve as a powerful witness to the world of the practicality of God’s love.

Being sensitive to the issues that are related to marital satisfaction and providing necessary intervention accordingly will improve the level of marital satisfaction of the couples from the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist church. In addition, with the healing of couples relationship as well as that of their families the church would have a more powerful impact on the society, especially in witnessing to the world as to what God can do for those who are willing to embrace Him and His truth.

Recommendations

As a result of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. This study examined the level of marital satisfaction among couples from the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church and indicates a high rate of marital dissatisfaction. Therefore, further studies should be conducted using a probability sample, as opposed to a convenient sample, after a series of marriage enrichment seminars, in order to

determine the attitude of couples toward marital interventions and their marital satisfaction. A probability sample is recommended because the sample used (convenience) was selected since the subjects were easier to recruit for the study and may not be representative of the Church's general population, as is the case with a probability (random) sample.

2. The study shows that marital satisfaction levels were very low. This further indicates a negative trajectory for marriages within the Adventist community where low levels of marital satisfaction are present. Therefore, further studies should be conducted within the jurisdiction of the Ontario Conference, as well as within the Adventist community within the North American Division (NAD), in order to determine the level of marital satisfaction among couples within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Based on those findings, an intervention should be utilized to speak to the needs that were discovered in the study.

3. A curriculum that addresses factors that contribute to marital satisfaction should be developed for educating young people, dating couples, engaged couples, and married couples. One way of doing this is to have a partnership with the GC/NAD Educational and Family Ministries departments and Seventh-day Adventist institutions of higher education in an effort to develop educational materials on conflict resolution skills for use in schools and churches. Another approach by these two departments could be to work together in developing appropriate family life materials for use in local churches in an effort to prepare young people for marriage, as well as to nurture existing marriages within each local church.

Last but not least, since well-disciplined families speak more in behalf of Christianity than all the sermons we will ever preach (White, 1952, p. 32), a budget line should be devoted in every conference within the North American Division for a family life professional to go to churches in that conference and coordinate healing and education for families. If this can be done for evangelism, then it is also time for the church to invest more in the families of the church, considering the fact that without a family, there will be no church and without a church, there will be no members to engage in evangelism. Therefore, it is of paramount importance for the church to invest more financially in catering to the needs of its wounded members through the family unit while it seeks to save the world through evangelism.

APPENDIX A
CORRESPONDENCE

Andrews University

September 9, 2010

Pastor Floyd Spence
507 Antique Court
Ottawa, ON K1V 2G8
Canada

Dear Pastor Spence:

Your project proposal, titled *Improving Marital Satisfaction Among Couples from the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church*, has been formally approved by the Doctor of Ministry Committee.

According to your proposal submission, you have requested Dr. Jeffery Brown to serve as your project advisor and Dr. Rene Drumm to serve as your second reader. This arrangement is also approved. We congratulate you on your progress, and wish you every success as you work to complete your degree.

Blessings,

David Penno, PhD
Doctor of Ministry Project Coach
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
Andrews University

Cc: Jeffery Brown
Rene Drumm

Doctor of Ministry Program
Seminary – Suite N210 Berrien Springs, MI 49104-1560 Tel 269.471.6366 Fax 269.471.6202
www.doctorofministry.com

Andrews University

June 9, 2010

Floyd Spence
507 Antique Court
Ottawa, ON
K1V2G8

RE: APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

IRB Protocol #: 10-039 **Application Type:** Original **Dept:** Seminary
Review Category: Expedited **Action Taken:** Approved **Advisor:** Jeffrey Brown
Title: Improving Marital Satisfaction among couples from the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church

This letter is to advise you that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved your proposal for research. You have been given clearance to proceed with your research plans.

All changes made to the study design and/or consent form, after initiation of the project, require prior approval from the IRB before such changes can be implemented. Feel free to contact our office if you have any questions. In all communications with our office, please be sure to identify your research by its IRB Protocol number.

The duration of the present approval is for one year. If your research is going to take more than one year, you must apply for an extension of your approval in order to be authorized to continue with this project.

Some proposal and research design designs may be of such a nature that participation in the project may involve certain risks to human subjects. If your project is one of this nature and in the implementation of your project an incidence occurs which results in a research-related adverse reaction and/or physical injury, such an occurrence must be reported immediately in writing to the Institutional Review Board. Any project-related physical injury must also be reported immediately to University Medical Specialties, by calling (269) 473-2222.

We wish you success as you implement the research project as outlined in the approved protocol.

Sincerely,

X

Administrative Coordinator
Institutional Review Board

Institutional Review Board
(269) 471-6360 Fax: (269) 471-6246 E-mail: irb@andrews.edu
Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI 49104-0355

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July 28, 2009

Institutional Review Board
Andrews University
Berrien Springs, MI 49104-0355

To Whom It May Concern:

The Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church welcomes the opportunity to cooperate with Floyd S. Spence and Andrews University in his graduate research project entitled: "Improving Marital Satisfaction among Couples from the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church." He has permission to conduct his survey among our church members.

Yours truly,

Bonnie J. Lowe
Church Clerk

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March 4, 2011

Floyd S. Spence
Graduate Student
Andrews University

Re: Marital Satisfaction Inventory, Revised (MSI-R)

Hello—

This follows up your email of 03Mar'11, seeking permission to reprint selected copyrighted items within the appendix of your dissertation.

Western Psychological Services authorizes you to reprint for inclusion in your dissertation (and in articles based directly thereon) items 1, 11, 21, 25 & 135 from the MSI-R on provision that each reprint bear the following required notice in its entirety:

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On behalf of WPS, I appreciate your interest in this instrument as well as your consideration for its copyright. It's our privilege to assist helping professionals, and I hope we can be of service to your future work.

Sincerely yours,

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APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSCENT FORM FOR SURVEY PARTICIPATION

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Doctor of Ministry Department

Informed Consent Form

Title: Improving Marital Satisfaction among Couples from the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Purpose of Study: I understand that the purpose of this study is to discover the level of marital dissatisfaction among married couples from the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church in order to determine what steps might be taken to improve their marital satisfaction.

Inclusion Criteria: In order to participate, I recognize that I must be between the ages of 18 and 75 yrs old, and must be married for at least two years and currently a regular attendant or member of the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist congregation.

Confidentiality:

Your responses will not be identified with you personally. Consequently in order for your participation to be anonymous each couple will be given two copies of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory, Revised (MSI-R) questionnaire and three envelopes. Both persons will individually complete one of the questionnaires without communicating with his/her spouse. Upon completion, each individual will place his/her completed questionnaire in one of the three envelopes provided. Both sealed envelopes will then be placed in the third envelope, which will then be sealed also. The third envelope containing the two completed questionnaires will then be placed in a drop off box at the back of the room.

Risks and Discomforts: I have been informed that there are no physical or emotional risks to my involvement in this study.

Benefits/Results: I accept that I will receive no remuneration for my participation, but that by participating, I will help the researcher and the Seventh-day Adventist Church arrive at a better understanding of why married couples become dissatisfied with their marriage and that this will enable the church to develop strategies that will improve marital satisfaction.

Voluntary Participation: I understand that my involvement in this survey is voluntary and that I may withdraw my participation at any time without any pressure, embarrassment, or negative impact on me. I also understand that participation is anonymous and that neither the researcher nor any assistants will be able to identify my responses to me.

Contact Information: In the event that I have any questions or concerns with regard to my participation in this research project, I understand that I may contact the researcher, Floyd S. Spence at floydspence@hotmail.com (Tel: 613-425-0043), or his advisors, Dr. Jeffrey Brown, at jbrown@oakwood.edu (Tel: 441-292-4110) and Dr. Rene' Drumm at rdrumm@southern.edu (Tel: 423-236-2766). I have been given a copy of this form for my own records.

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE SURVEY QUESTIONS

Marital Satisfaction Inventory, Revised (MSI-R)

Sample Questions

1. When my partner and I have differences of opinion,
we sit down and discuss them. (T) (F)
11. I would prefer to have sexual relations more frequently
than we do now. (T) (F)
21. Our relationship has been very satisfying. (T) (F)
25. My partner and I decide together the manner in which
our income is to be spent. (T) (F)
135. My partner and I rarely disagree on when or how to
discipline the children. (T) (F)

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APPENDIX D

THE ART & SCIENCE OF LOVE SEMINAR TOPICS

The Art & SCIENCE of Love
Weekend Workshop for Couples
March 26-April 9, 2011

Created by Drs. John and Julie Gottman (World Renown Relationship Experts)
Presented by Floyd S. Spence (M.A.)

Workshop Topics:

- March 25 - "Enhance Your Love Maps"
(Learning about each other's likes, dislikes, wishes, hopes and dreams, prerequisites for marital intimacy)
- March 26 (PM) - "Nurture Your Fondness and Admiration"
(Learning how to focus on your partners' positive qualities, so as to renew respect and care for one another).
- April 1 - "Turn toward Each Other Instead of Away"
(Learning how to connect/re-connect with ones partner through frequent interaction)
- April 2 (AM) - "Let Your Partner Influence you"
(Learning to share power through understanding the feelings that make a person refuse to compromise and creating a shared understanding of others values, attitudes and interests)
- April 2 (PM) - "Solve Your Solvable Problems"
(Learning to resolve solvable problems as opposed to perpetual problems)
- April 8 - "Overcome Gridlock,"
(Learning to deal with perpetual problems through dialogue as opposed to solving the problem)
- April 9 (PM) - "Create Shared Meaning,"
(Learning how to make your dreams and aspirations come through for you, your partner, and your relationship)

APPENDIX E

MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT EVALUATION FORM

**Marital Satisfaction Seminar
Evaluation Form**

1. List at least three things you have learned from the seminar.

2. Have any of your views in any of the subject areas changed as a result of the seminar? (If yes, what are they and what are your views now?) Yes () No ()

3. Is there a change in your relationship as a result of this seminar? (If yes, what are the changes?) Yes () No ()

4. Do you feel your marriage has been enriched as a result of this seminar? (If yes give reasons). Yes () No ()

5. Are you committed to the nurturing of the relationship through the practicing of those things learned in the seminar? Yes () No ()

Comments/Recommendation:

REFERENCE LIST

REFERENCE LIST

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VITAE

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