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**MARITAL SATISFACTION**

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Today, divorce is a quick way out for people who feel trapped in an unhappy marriage. However, the people who really suffer from the divorce are not so much the parents but rather the children. Sometimes, it seems that the parents who try to use the route of divorce as the ultimate solution are really acting in a self-centered manner.

Riley (1991) cites that the first documented divorce took place in the USA in 1639. By 1880, one in every sixteen marriages ended in divorce. By 1928, one in every six marriages ended in divorce. By 1995, one in every two marriages ended in divorce. Amato (2000) seems to mimic the findings stated earlier. Of all the changes in family life during the 20th century, perhaps the most dramatic and the most far-reaching in its implications was the increase in the rate of divorce. Near the middle of the 19th century, only about 5% of first marriages ended in divorce. In contrast, Cherlin (1992), estimates that about half of first marriages initiated in recent years will be voluntarily dissolved. According to Hetherington (1998), there is a significant decline in the proportion of two parent families in the first marriages and the number increase in the single parent households and step families. He continues to say that almost one half of marriages end in divorce in the United States, and one million children experience their parents' divorce each year. It is projected that between 50% and 60% of children born in the 1990s will live, at some point, in a single parent family. From those who divorced, 75% of all men and 66% of women will remarry. However, this figure is substantially lower than the percentage of people who marry for the first time. Moreover, divorces are more frequent in remarriages and occur at a rate 10% higher than that in the first marriages. As a result of divorce marriages about half of all

children whose parents divorce will have a stepfather within four years of parental separation, and 1 out of every 10 children will experience at least two divorces of their residential parent before turning 16 years of age Hetherington (1998).

The high rate of marital disruption, combined with an increase in births outside marriage, means that about half of all children will reside at least temporarily in single-parent households, usually with their mothers. Because of remarriage, about one in seven children currently lives with a parent and stepparent and about one in three children will live with a stepparent for some time prior to reaching age 19 (Bumpass, 1991). Observers have attributed this change to a number of factors, including the increasing economic independence of women, declining earnings among men without college degrees, rising expectations for personal fulfillment from marriage, and greater social acceptance of divorce. Remarriage following divorce is common, and nearly one-half of current marriages involve a second (or higher order) marriage for one or both partners. Second (and higher order) marriages, however, have an even greater likelihood of dissolution than first marriages. As a result, about one out of every six adults endures two or more divorces. The shift from a dominant pattern of lifelong marriage to one of serial marriage punctuated by periods of being single represents a fundamental change in how adults meet their needs for intimacy over the life course (Cherlin, 1992).

## CHAPTER II

### The Effect After a Divorce

Shulman, Scharf, Lumer, and Maurer (2001) conducted a study that focused on parental divorce and young adult children's romantic relationships. The data were collected from 51 Israeli college students (30 females and 21 males) whose parents were divorced. None of the participants was married, but all had a romantic partner in a relationship that had lasted more than three months. Current age was 19-29 years ( $M=23.9$ ), while mean age at time of parental divorce was 11.8 years, and the mean duration of the romantic relationship was 23.4 months ( $SD=18.4$ ). Of the divorced parents, 23% of mothers and 63% of fathers had remarried. Most participants (72.5%) had been raised by their mother, and a few were in either their father's or joint custody. Two modes of data collection were used for the study: interviews that were later transcribed and rated, and questionnaires. A set of t-tests was conducted to examine gender differences - no significant gender differences were found in any of the items. Pearson correlations between age of a child at divorce and current perception of romantic relationships were computed. No significant correlations were found. A set of t-tests was conducted to compare quality romantic relationships of young adults whose mothers stayed single with that of those mothers had remarried.  $t= 2.45$ ,  $p<.05$ ;  $M= 4.55$  ( $SD= 0.08$ ) and  $M= 3.85$  ( $SD= 0.10$ ). The findings were that young adults whose mothers had not remarried described more problems in their romantic relationship than did those mothers that had remarried;  $t= 2.21$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $M= 2.51$  ( $SD= 0.11$ ) and  $M=1.70$  ( $SD= 0.09$ ), respectively. Significant correlations were found between level of parental conflict during divorce. Results also showed that divorce was found to be related to normal levels of friendship, enjoyment, and intimacy and to fewer problems in young

adults' romantic relationships. They concluded that an integrative perception of the divorce was found to be related to fewer problems and to higher levels of friendship, enjoyment, and intimacy in the relationship, Shulman, Scharf, Lumer, and Maurer (2001). Wallerstein and Lewis (2004) tested these assumptions in a study where 131 children, who were 3-18 years old when their parents divorced in the early 1970s, marks the culmination of 25 years of research. The use of extensive clinical interviews allowed for exploration in great depth of their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors as they negotiated childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, and adulthood. After 25 years of follow up, a comparison group of their peers from the same community was added. Results revealed significant main effects showing that growing up were harder for most of the children during the post divorce years. The lives of parents and children changed overnight. For the children of any age they struggled with bewildering and demanding adjustments in their contact with both parents. In the sample, 45% of the children had to face relocation to a new neighborhood and new school, along with the consequent disruptions and losses in their friendships and activities. Those children of any age was reported the damage of the divorce in their personal relationship. They continue to say that relationships in general are unreliable. About two thirds of the children experienced multiple marriages and divorce. Less than 10% of the children had parents who established stable, lasting second marriages in which the children felt fully welcome. Those children that experienced violence during their parents' marriage reported that the stop in violence after the divorce was final; however, those children experienced post traumatic symptoms. None received treatment prior to adulthood. Over half of those subjects reported memory fragments that captured key moments of the breakup. These images intruded into their adult relationships at crisis points. In addition to all of that, many of the subjects

described a happy childhood; however when the divorce was final they had to face the responsibility of head of household in taking care of younger children. About 38% needed also to take care of the parent. Those subjects felt that they lost out on their childhood and adolescent pleasures and the important aspects of their social development. The entire comparison group remembered talking to their parents about their college plans; however, none of the children of divorced families in the study were invited by both parents, either separately or together. Only 30% of the children of divorce received support from their parents throughout college, as compared with 90% of the comparison group. Those of the 30% that graduated from college were successful in the workplace. Wallerstein and Lewis (2004) continue to say that the center finding of this study is that parental divorce impacts detrimentally the capacity to love and be loved within a lasting, committed relationship. The subjects had reported fears of commitment to any kind of relationship. Overall, subjects experienced difficulties in achieving love, sexual intimacy, and commitment to marriage and parenthood.

Hetherington (1998), conducted a set of studies that further illustrates the distress after the divorce. In one of his studies he found that psychological distress and disorders may increase after divorce. Parents had been reported that the divorce precessing made them neurotic, depressed, antisocial, or alcoholic. In addition, to have economic problems, and to have dysfunctional beliefs about relationships. In their marital interactions, they exhibit poor problem solving and conflict resolution skills. The escalating reciprocation of negative affect, contempt, denial, withdrawal, and negative attributions about their spouses' behavior, which in turn significantly increased their risk for marital dissolution and multiple divorces. In most cases of divorce, it takes about two years after the divorce to show a decrease in distress. It has been

shown that women are less depressed and more psychological well being. In another one of his studies, Hetherington measured temperaments of children. He concluded that children who have easy temperaments ; who are intelligent, socially mature, and responsible; and who exhibit few behavior problems are better able to cope with their parents' marital transitions.

In a set of studies by Amato (2001), children with divorced parents continue to score significantly lower on measures of academic achievement, conduct, psychological adjustment, self-concept, and social relations. In verification, the authors found that the female adolescents' delinquent activities in 1980 significantly predicted their divorced status in 1994. In addition, the mother's current age, as well as her age when she had her first child, were both related to children's externalizing behavior, such that younger mothers had children who exhibited more behavioral difficulties. Predictably, a mother's delinquent behavior - defined as abusing drugs, being delinquent at school and having contact with the criminal justice system - while the mother herself was an adolescent, was positively correlated with her age when she had her first child and her poverty status in both 1980 and 1994. The link between a mother's prior delinquent behavior and her child's present problem behavior (defined as antisocial behavior, anxious or depressed behavior, social withdrawal or engaging in high amounts of parental conflict) remained strong even when the mother's current marital status and other demographic factors were taken into account statistically. Therefore, the authors conclude, parents' personal behavior and personality characteristics have a larger impact on their children's behavior than does their married, never married, or divorced status, Amato (2001). Although the latter study places the blame for the cause of children's behavioral problems on the mothers' delinquency prior to marriage as well as the former study conducted which saddles the culpability on the mothers income, education,

ethnicity, child-rearing beliefs, depressive symptoms, and behavior, parental antisocial behavior is a good candidate among a host of behavioral and personality variables that might lead to nonrandom selection into single parent status and, thereby, explain the association between divorce or non marital childbirth and children's behavior problems. The studies ultimately suggests that there are factors that “predispose families to both divorce and to having troubled children”(Aaron, Kitzman, Emery, Waldron, 1999).

Based on the data gathered, it is of the belief that one of the effects that children initially suffer is the effect that the divorce process itself has on the parents. At first, every divorce typically originates from months and even years of personal flare-ups, excessive fighting, lack of communication skills, and ultimately a total harmonic breakdown. This meltdown will routinely create anger, frustration, and a general feel of disdain that will usually lead to depression. The divorced couple will deal with these issues on a personal level. At this stage, some people will lose interest in the way they look. Some people will become depressed, feel old, ugly and utterly alone. All of these feelings of despair will have a daunting effect on the children which will only magnify the problem for the parent and spiral out of control. At this point, seeking professional help is advisable, Ebling (2003).

In an unfortunate antecedent strike, the first negative effects of divorce on adults can occur years prior to final separation and legal dissolution. In authentication, Amato, (2000) presents that overt conflict between parents during this period might lead to behavior problems in children that can be viewed as early effects of marital dissolution. Curiously, it is often the case that one spouse wants the marriage to end more than the other spouse does. When this happens, the spouse who is considering divorce might mourn the end of the marriage even though it is still

legally and physically intact. Indeed, when the marriage is legally terminated, the initiating spouse often experiences a great deal of relief. The spouse who wanted the marriage to continue, in contrast, might not mourn the end of the marriage until the legal divorce is completed. Spouses, therefore, often experience the greatest degree of emotional distress at different points in the divorce process. The same principle applies to children. For example, an older child might experience stress prior to the divorce, during the period when the parents' marriage is unraveling. For this older child, the physical separation of constantly warring parents might come as a relief. For a younger child in the same family, however, the departure of one parent from the household might be a bewildering event that generates considerable anxiety. In other words, members of divorcing families can experience different trajectories of stress and adjustment (Amatto, 2000)

Approximately one million children experience divorce each year, and some policymakers argue for policies that would make it more difficult for parents to divorce. However, being exposed to a high degree of marital conflict has been shown to place children at risk for a variety of problems. Using mother-child data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) and a prospective design, this research explores two questions: Do the effects of marital disruption on child well-being vary for children whose parents leave high-conflict marriages versus low-conflict marriages? How do children fare when their high-conflict parents remain together? The survey findings show that separation and divorce are associated with increases in behavior problems in children, regardless of the level of conflict between parents. However, in marriages that do not break up, high levels of marital conflict are associated with even greater increases in children's behavior problems (Morrison, 1999). Diametrically, Some researchers have argued that stress perspectives tend to focus exclusively on the negative aspects

of divorce and ignore positive outcomes for children (Barber & Eccles, 1992). The notion that divorce can be beneficial is not inconsistent with a stress perspective; However, Thoits (1995), for example, argued that potentially stressful events, such as marital disruption, can have positive long-term consequences when people resolve their problems successfully. Similarly, Wheaton (1990) demonstrated, using longitudinal data, that when individuals are moderately happy with their marriages, divorce is followed by a decline in psychological well-being, but when individuals are unhappy with their marriages, divorce is followed by an increase in psychological well-being. Divorce represents an increase in stress for the former groups and a decrease in stress for the latter group. Consequently, divorce is likely to be defined differently by these two groups of individuals. In correlation, a similar process seems to apply to children. Amato & Booth, (2001) asseverate that children in households where parents engage in a long-term process of overt, unresolved conflict are at risk for a variety of developmental and emotional problems. When a divorce occurs, these children are freed from a dysfunctional home environment and may genuinely welcome the shift to a calmer single-parent household. Under these circumstances, children's conflict-related symptoms are likely to improve over time. In contrast, children in households in which parents engage in relatively little overt conflict are at low risk for developmental and emotional problems. Even if parents are not highly committed to the marriage, children still benefit from the economies of scale provided by a two-parent household (and usually two parental incomes) and by having ready access to both parents. They also benefit from stability in their neighborhood and friendships, as well as from regular school attendance. Children are likely to view divorce under these circumstances as an unexpected, unwelcome, and uncontrollable event, an event that sets into motion a series of stressful circumstances (a decline

in standard of living, loss of contact with one parent, and moving) with no compensating advantages. Under these circumstances, children may exhibit a variety of stress-related symptoms, including lower academic achievement, behavioral and emotional problems, loss of affection for parents, and difficulties in forming close, long-term ties with others, Amato & Booth, (2001).

## CHAPTER III

### Parental responsibility

In corroboration, all of the research indicates and all of the experts agree that divorce is a very painful transition in the life of most families who go through it. Without escape, Lowenstein (2000) contends that stress is a part of life, but many families are forced to endure situations that go far beyond the normal course of life.

Subsequent to the articles, journals, and case studies that have overwhelmingly demonstrated statistics, evidence, and theories concerning the overall negative effects on the children of divorced parents, fortunately there are just as many books, seminars, and organizations that administer techniques on how to effectively navigate the murky waters and pitfalls of the divorce process. According to Smith, (1999) Parents must put parental responsibilities before personal needs, and make children aware that they are united in their concern over their well-being. It is also recommended that parents allow their children comfortable contact with both parents, as well as the extended family. Other suggestions include fostering honest communication between parents, throughout the divorce process, respecting children's feelings and answering their questions, and carefully considering the timing of life changes and introducing them gradually. It is beneficial to remind parents to afford teenagers flexibility with their social needs and to recognize that teenagers going through divorce are still dealing with typical developmental issues in addition to the divorce process (Katz, 2001).

## CHAPTER IV

### Marital Satisfaction

An important variable that needs to be addressed is: are those couples that stay together - truly satisfied ? According to Esquer, Burnett, Baucom, & Norman (1997) marital satisfaction is sought, or expected, by most married individuals. Unfortunately, the U.S. Bureau of Census in 1992 reported that 52% of marriages ended in divorce. This fact, along with other stimulants, has caused researchers to investigate the influences on marital satisfaction. Many predictors of stability and satisfaction in marriage do, in fact, exist. Among the various possibilities explored by researchers, conclusive studies have been done on the influences of past and present satisfaction with one's spouse's personality and living conditions, the effect of autonomy and relatedness on marriage, the Empty Nest Syndrome, as well as types of premarital relations and their effect on marital satisfaction. Literature linking the quality of premarital relationships to marital satisfaction continues to grow. Studies reviewed in this literature show that relationship satisfaction declines in the first 2 to 3 years of marriage, and that although the majority of satisfactory marriages are stable, marital dissatisfaction does not always result in marital instability. Thus, determining different premarital antecedents which influence later marital satisfaction is important. Four types of premarital couples were determined for study by Fowers and Olson (1992), all couples of each type completed a prepare inventory 3-4 months prior to their marriage, and again 2-3 years later. The purpose of the prepare inventory was to assess and identify strengths and weaknesses related to relationship issues, such as expectations, communication, personality, and conflict resolution tactics. The Vitalized couples had the highest degree of overall marital satisfaction, with strong communication abilities, strong satisfaction concerning affection, sexuality, shared time, finances,

and a strong belief in religious importance. Harmonious couples were moderately satisfied with their marriages overall. These individuals shared and related well with each other and each other's family and friends, yet the decline in satisfaction seemed to be caused by their unrealistic view of marriage and child-related issues. Traditional couples had moderate dissatisfaction, although they were the least likely to divorce, and conflicted couples showed distress and high divorce tendencies. The important influence on marital satisfaction found in this study can be seen through the greater amount of emphasis placed on marital satisfaction by Harmonious couples, than that placed on stability by Traditional couples. Thus communication and relationship satisfaction did result in greater marital satisfaction and did prove to be influenced by premarital views. A dimensional analysis done on past and present satisfaction, proved that concerning many different domains, current and past relationship satisfaction can predict over-all marital satisfaction. This study done by Plechaty, Couturier, Cote, and Roy, (1996) hypothesized that spouses' personality and living conditions as a couple, namely intimacy and communication, would be the most frequent sources of satisfaction or dissatisfaction accounting for much in the relationship. A preliminary correlation analysis showed that age and the number of children a couple had did significantly correlate with marital satisfaction, yet the two domains of spouses' personality and living issues (including intimacy and communication), were the major influences on marital satisfaction. Other influences on happiness and satisfaction in marriages were found to be autonomy and relatedness by Rankin-Esquer, Burnett, Baucom, and Epstein (1997). Autonomy refers to spouse's perceptions of the extent to which partners encouraged a sense of independence and individuality.

Relatedness, in this study, referred to a spouse's perceptions of the amount of closeness that their partners provided. The findings of this study did differ for males and females, specifically in that females found relatedness to be important in determining the standards of their relationship, held by themselves and their husbands, and that no relationship was found between male's views of standards, or their interpretation of their wives, and relatedness. It was found through this study that autonomy and relatedness were not only significantly positively correlated with each other but also with marital adjustment and satisfaction in both males and females. Finally, research done on the well-know "empty-nest" stage in adult life also found significant influence on marital satisfaction. While observing and researching those adults in the launching stages of parenthood, White and Edwards (1990) found that overall, an empty nest, (the absence of children), has a significant positive effect on marital happiness. This happiness was found to be strongest relatively soon after the last child is launched. Also, the degree of enjoyment couples got out of their "post-launch honeymoon phase" was greater if the child most recently launched was in his teenage years, rather than young or even middle adulthood. The strongest and most repeatedly found reason for these trends seems to be the unavoidable existence of parental stress. "Even the best of children of the most conventional parents tend to be a source of strain in the marital relationship," stated White and Edwards (p. 240).

The fact remains that for most parents, the role of parent continues despite living separations from the children, yet the empty nest stage has proved to positively affect marital satisfaction.

Katz,(2001).

These factors found to contribute to a “happy” marriage are by no means the only influences on marital satisfaction. The important similarity between each of these studies is the finding of significant positive effects on happiness with one's marriage. Premarital views and personality types were found to indicate marital satisfaction later on in life, as were past and present levels of life satisfaction, specifically concerning spouses' personalities and dual living conditions. Autonomy and relatedness, otherwise known as an encouraging sense of spousal independence and perceptions of closeness, were found to positively correlate to each other, and more significantly, to overall marital satisfaction. Also, the important parental stage of childlessness, or the Empty Nest period, proved to positively influence marital satisfaction for both spouses, Pacey (2004).

In another set of studies, Amstutz-Haws and Mallinckrodt (1996) surveyed 25 heterosexual couples who were 18-30 years old and had been married between 6-13 months on how much they felt they were psychologically detached from their parents and have established themselves as distinct individuals. Each spouse was also asked whether they felt they got along as a couple, whether they were satisfied with the marriage, whether they received enough affection and whether they agreed enough on various issues. A husbands' lack of independence from both his parents was the biggest predictor for both spouses not adjusting very well to the new marriage. Both spouses reported higher levels of adjustment and satisfaction in their marriage when the husbands were free from excessive guilt, anxiety, mistrust, responsibility, inhibition, resentment and anger in relation to their mothers. The couples were also better adjusted in their new marriage when the husband possessed a greater ability to manage and direct practical affairs without the help

of his father. Wives' adjustment to marriage seemed to depend on how well the husbands separated from their parents. Whereas husbands' adjustment to marriage depended on how well both spouses separated from their parents' influence. Amstutz-Haws and Mallinckrodt (1996) also found that a person who marries someone similar to his/her psychological type and also has similar interests is much more likely to stay married and be happier with their selection, says new research that explores psychological types and their affect on a couple's satisfaction and behavior. Marioles (1997) of St. Mary's University and five other researchers asked 426 married and pre married couples to take the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator which measures peoples preferences on how they relate to the world. The study than compared each type with each spouses' marital satisfaction. A person can have four different types that determine how they deal with the world. One can be either extraverted or introverted. Extraverted people prefer to relate to people in the outer world rather relating to the inner world of ideas which Introverted people prefer. A Sensing person likes to have known facts to make decisions whereas an Intuitive person prefers to look for possibilities and relationships that aren't apparent to make decisions. Thinking types like to base their judgments on interpersonal analysis and logic. Feeling types like to base their judgments more on personal values. Finally, Judging types like a planned, decided and orderly way of life compared to Perceiving types who like a flexible, spontaneous way of life. The couples were monitored over a seven-year period to determine marital behavior and predictors of satisfaction and divorce. The study continued to examine how many times each person was married, the length of the marriage, changes of marital status and sources of marital satisfaction and irritation. The couples, said Dr. Marioles, "were most satisfied in their marriage if they both could confide in their mate, share

outside interests, calmly discuss and exchange ideas.” Premarital couples needed to satisfy those areas plus be able to plan together, question each other and kiss each other. He also found very little evidence that opposites marry. The only exceptions were ESTJ men married to INFP women and ESTP men married to INFJ women. These two types of men, said the authors, were also the two types who had been married the most often. Men who were INFPs, INFJs and INTPs most often married a female with the same psychological type. Women, on the other hand, who were ENFJs and INFJs married men with the same type. The researchers also found that female feeling types (mostly ESFJs) were married the longest and that female thinking types (mostly INTP) were married the fewest number of years. Perceiving types were more likely to have divorced than judging types. Extraverts tended to be more satisfied with their relationships than Introverts which didn't take into account their length of marriage or how many times they had been married. It was concluded that its likelihood that people are more likely to be attracted to and marry someone of the same type than they are a person of the opposite type. Women were dissatisfied with the marriage most often (33 percent) when they were married to a man who was an INTP; 31 percent were dissatisfied when they were married to an INFS; and 22 percent were dissatisfied when they were married to an ISFP. Only 13 percent of the men were dissatisfied when the women were an ENFJ and 12 percent of the men were dissatisfied when the women were an ENFP. Watanabe and Fujihara (1998) investigated the relationship between marital adjustment and social adjustment. A sample of 67 married Japanese men and 79 married Japanese women, ranging in age 25-85 years. For the whole sample, the total score of the Short Marital Adjustment Test (SMAT - 1959) and its subcategories was significantly correlated with 5 subcategory scores of the Social Adjustment

Scale - II (SAS-II 1978). Among men, the dyadic consensus scores of the SMAT had stronger correlations with the social adjustment scores. Among women, correlations with the marital satisfaction scores of the SMAT were stronger. Thus, marital adjustment may be a part of social adjustment for women, but the two may be discrete for men. In another study by Tucker and Grady (1991) they looked at the effects of physical attractiveness, intelligence, age at marriage, and cohabitation on the perception of marital satisfaction, with a sample of 128 undergraduates were evaluated. The results of a multivariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed 7 significant main effects and 3 significant interaction effects. Significant main effects were found for the gender of S and all within-S factors except cohabitation. Male attractiveness and intelligence, female attractiveness and intelligence were found to be significant.

Sex is another variable for marital satisfaction. A study performed by Donnelly (1993) analyzed sex within marriage. The study was involved with a sample of 6029 married people to determine which factors are related to sexually inactive marriages and if sexually inactive marriages are less happy and satisfying than those with sexual activity. The study was measured nineteen independent variables: life satisfaction, religious fundamentalism, gender role traditionality, individualism, marital interaction variables, and marital happiness. It was found that marital happiness and shared activity are inversely correlated with probability of separation and sexual inactivity. Findings of the study was reported that the lower the marital happiness and shared activity, the greater the chance of sexual inactivity and separation. Donnelly (1993), continues to say that “the fact that the couple is not having sex could be an indicator that there are others problems within the marriage”. In addition to this study, another set of studies by Morokoff

And Gilliland (1993), also seeking to answer the question of how sexual activity and satisfaction relate to marital satisfaction. The sample were 165 men and women measuring background, medical history, life experience, life hassles, marital adjustment, and sexual functioning. The relationship between stress, sexual functioning and marital satisfaction was examined. The result of the study was indicated that marital satisfaction is closely related to several aspects of sexual functioning. Most significantly, sexual satisfaction, perception of spouses sexual satisfaction, and frequency of sexual intercourse are positively correlated with marital satisfaction; However, the greater negative emotional reactions and dissatisfaction with frequency of intercourse, the less satisfaction with the marriage. It appears from the research conducted by Donnelly and Morokoff and Gilliland that personal sexual satisfaction, frequency of sex and sexual activities, and the sexual interest and satisfaction of one's spouse has a great deal to do with marital satisfaction. In fact they had been proved that sex is so important to marital satisfaction that sexual inactivity maybe a sign that there are other problems within the marriage. These findings suggest that their a number of factors of marital satisfaction.

Many studies were conducted on elderly marital satisfaction. In these studies they found continuations similarities. For example: The wife knew 10 years into her marriage that it wasn't working. She and her husband argued constantly. He made all the decisions; she felt she had no say. But instead of divorcing, she stayed for 21 more years. It wasn't until she was 50, when her children were grown with kids of their own, that she finally got up the nerve to leave. They all reported that it was the most difficult experience of their life and one that triggered conflicting emotions. "The hardest part was learning how to be alone, But I liked being independent."

Experts say the number of people ending long-term marriages after age 50 is steadily increasing. "The divorce rate has risen for adults at all ages over the past decades," says Dr. Andrew. According to new survey commissioned by AARP The Magazine of 1,147 men and women, ages 40 to 79, who experienced a divorce in their 40s, 50s, or 60s. Overall, respondents emerged from the ordeal of later-life divorce far happier and emotionally healthier than most would have dared to hope at the outset. The deciding to leave the marriage is initiated by the women. In the AARP survey, 66 percent of women reported that they asked for the divorce, compared with 41 percent of men.

Women often recognize the danger signs of a problem marriage earlier than men do, says Dr. Markman. These are the signals of estrangement and unhappiness—less talking, for example—that may start as a distant buzz and over time grow into a roar of discontent. "An impulse divorce is a very rare thing," confirms psychologist Dr. Ahrons, professor emeritus at the University of Southern California and an expert on relationships and divorce. In fact, marital discontent often festers for years. Among the women in the study who divorced in their 50s or older, about a third started contemplating the split at least two years before it happened; 21 percent of men in their 50s or older did likewise. About one in 10 women ruminated for 10 years or more. But this trend was more pronounced in women over age 60 than in boomers, who tend to decide faster, says Dr. Vetrano. "A higher number of women in their 50s have had careers and are more independent," she says. "They're more likely to get out of a bad marriage sooner."

One of the reason of divorce in the elderly is staying for the kids. When contemplating divorce, many people bide their time to spare potential victims—the children. Kids are the glue that keeps marriages together, for better or worse. That's particularly true for dads: 58 percent of

men—compared with 37 percent of women—cited their children as the top reason they postponed a divorce for five years or longer. Despite their best efforts to hold things together, more than one in four of the people in their 50s still had adolescent kids at the time of their divorce. "My overall concern was how the destruction of our family would play out in my daughter's life," Jack Martin (not his real name) reveals. "My daughter was deeply affected by our divorce, and I worry about the impact that will have on her"(AARP).

Why do men worry more about the children than women do? Because women take for granted that they'll stay close to the kids. Most experts agree that men of all ages have more to lose in a divorce, especially when it comes to children. According to our survey, 42 percent of the men said that their worst fears after the divorce involved their children, with most of these men worrying they'd lose contact with their kids. In comparison, only 15 percent of women had these fears. "For men, it's a well-founded fear," says Vetrano, who lectures on elder divorce law nationally. "Men lose their children a lot" (AARP).

Another reason for divorce in the elderly are physical or emotional abuse, infidelity, and drug or alcohol abuse. Many of those divorce were the second time around. It may be easier to split up a divorce for the second time . Nearly half (47 percent) of the divorced people in the AARP study had also gone through a divorce when they were younger. "People who were somewhat traumatized by their first divorce tend to bail out sooner on the second marriage," says Dr. Gottman, "If things aren't going well, they'll predict that they're in for the same painful experience, and they get out." Among people 50 and older who said infidelity caused 22their divorce, 93 percent of women and 78 percent of men said their spouse was the one at fault. In getting down to toaster-hurling specifics, most women in their 50s or older said the top killers of their marriages

were physical or emotional abuse, infidelity, and drug or alcohol abuse—and they put almost all of the blame on their ex-husbands. On the flip side, most 50-plus men said they simply "fell out of love" or had "different values or lifestyles." And a larger number of men, though not the majority, said it was their own fault (AARP).

The one thing neither sex would take the blame for, however, was an affair. Among people 50 and older who said infidelity caused their divorce, 93 percent of women and 78 percent of men said their spouse was the one at fault. In doing the math, it's obvious that many may be fudging the truth about who cheated, or may disagree with their ex as to whether the affair really did their marriage in. This blame shifting may not be due to lying, but rather a matter of perception, says Dr. Gottman. "It's not uncommon for someone to cheat and then blame their partner for it," he says. "If someone is lonely or feels their mate has lost all interest in them, they can rationalize that they were driven to have an affair." Traditionally, men have been perceived to be the cheaters. However, while most research has suggested that men are more likely to stray, some say that the gap may be closing. "Baby-boomer women are in the work world—and that's where you meet that sympathetic person when you're having a bad marriage," Dr. Gottman says. "It's opportunity, not biology, and while men had much greater opportunity for cheating in the past, it's far more equal now."

The perceived benefits of divorce differ by gender. Women were far more likely than men to say that having their own self-identity was a top reward. That made them a little gun-shy of marrying again anytime soon: 43 percent of women said they emerged from the split against remarriage. Only 33 percent of men said they wouldn't remarry. Women are more likely to have a strong network of friends to support them after a divorce, explains psychologist Dr. Ahrons, author

of We're Still Family: What Grown Children Have to Say About Their Parents' Divorce. Men typically don't. That makes men more vulnerable to loneliness—the worst fear for both sexes in a divorce. It's telling that a third more men than women in our study had remarried after their mid life divorce.

## CHAPTER V

### Purpose of the Program Design

The primary purpose of the current program is to further examine and to improved the level of marital satisfaction. Overall, we can find an enormous amount of information on divorce and the outcome of it. In contrast, very little information can be found on marital satisfaction programs. One of the questions that needs to be asked and tested is: of those couple that do stay together, how many are actually satisfied? If the answer is no, that they are not satisfied, what is the individual, and the couple as a whole, doing about it? Marriage is usually described in developmental literature as a normative personal life event that occurs in early adulthood, Kurdek (1999) which is centrally important for adults' overall well being, that there is substantial variability in the happiness of those who are in durable marriages. Yet, the lack of descriptive information regarding marital "happiness" is not out there. Evidence shows that approximately 90% of both men and women in the USA are married by the age of 45. About 50% will eventually divorce, and of the remaining 40% that stay together there is limited data as to whether they are happy, Karney and Bradbury (1995). If proof can be found that within the couple that stay together they are not satisfying, than steps can be taken to increase marital satisfaction. According to Davila (2001) "Unhappy marriages can be identified in early stages." She continues to say that spouses that are unhappy in their marriages have high levels of depressive symptoms. Evidence shows that with the right tools couples can learn to satisfy their spouse, which ultimately will increase marital happiness. According to Wills (2001), 75% of couples that received therapy are better off than couples that did not receive therapy at all. Of those couples, 65% had reported significant improvement based on average scores of marital satisfaction. In contrast, Wills (2001) found that

therapy does not affect each spouse's satisfaction in the marriage equally. In one of the set of studies he reported that only 50% of treated couples both spouses reported significant improvement in marital satisfaction at the end of the treatment.

### Hypotheses

As statistics shows in order to increase the levels of satisfaction, a treatment plan will be provide to each couple. The level of satisfaction will be measured by interview and number of tests with include the Marital Adjustment Test (MAT) Hypotheses, Marital Adjustment Scale (MAS) Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), Conflict Tactics Scale- Revised (CTS-2). Sentence Completion Series- Marriage, Marital Interaction Coding System (MICS), Behavioral Couple Therapy (BCT) Behavior Exchange (BE) and movies also will be examined in relation to marital satisfaction within the marriage, which will give a better clarification of increasing levels of satisfaction.

In the current program design, married couples will be evaluated for their marital satisfaction. It is expected to find individuals and/or couples that live under the condition of unhappiness within their marriage. Tests will be used, as a tool, to assess the individual and/or the couple on their level of marital satisfaction. These tests - MAT, MSI-R, DAS, CTS-2, SCS-M, MICS and BCT will confirm the satisfaction level within the marriage. In addition, the unsatisfied individual or couple, will be expected to feel less stress in their relationship, and increased levels of satisfaction within the marriage, after receiving an individual, couple and group treatment. Lastly, participants in the program are expected to have decreased thoughts of separation and increased thoughts of togetherness.

## METHOD

### Participants

A program design will be developed in order to increase satisfaction within the marriage and to prevent the risk of divorce. The program will be catered to individuals and/or couples that live under the condition of unsatisfied marriage, and has thought of separation. Each couple will be consisting of one male and one female, all of whom have been married for 3-15 years. Each of the participants will receive a folder which will contain a brief description of the program, specific dates and times that the husband and wife are available and additional blank slots to write their full names and phone numbers that they can be reached. Each of the participants will take the folder to discuss the program with their spouse. The folder will be returned within a week signed by the couple. The program participants will be contacted two days prior to their date of availability, to confirm the meeting. All testing and treatment plans will be conducted at the clinic. Participants will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form, (see Appendices B) that explains the general purpose of the program and the rights as a participant. Participants will understand that they have the right to withdraw at any time without explanation, but understand that the result will not be fully achieved. In addition, they will be informed that all information and test results provided by them will be confidential.

## Instruments

### Marital Adjustment Scale (MAS)

The MAS is a commonly used, well validated, self report measure of marital satisfaction. (Locker and Wallace, 1959). All couples will be screened at stage 1 of the MAS. If one of the study participants scored an average of less than 100, which is the common cutoff for marital distress, they are then eligible to go to the next stage of screening.

### Marital Adjustment Test (MAT)

The MSI-R is a well norm questionnaire that provides two validity scales. It consists of 14 true-false items that measures steps toward separation/divorce, ranging from thought to tentative steps. Scores range from 0 to 14 depending on the number of steps the respondents have taken toward divorce. Research has shown that the MSI can identify couples at risk of divorce (Crane, Newfield, and Armstrong, 1984). One global distress scale, and ten scales assessing specific domains of marriage. The Global Distress Scale (GDS) of the MSI-R is a measure of overall dissatisfaction in a relationship and serve as both a screening measure and an outcome measure in this research, (Snyder, 1997). As part of the stage 2 screening, partners completed the full MSI-R. At the stage 3 screening, partners completed only the GDS of the MSI-R as a final verification of the stability of their distress. To be eligible for the study, at least one partner had to attain a T score of 59 or higher on the GDS at both stage 2 and stage 3 screening.

### Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS)

Along with the MAS and the GDS, the DAS is a widely used self report measure of marital satisfaction and perhaps the most widely used measure of couple treatment outcome (Spanier, 1976). At stage 3 of screening, at least one spouse had to score at least one standard

deviation below the population mean (<98) for the couple to be included in the study.

#### Conflict Tactics Scale- Revised (CTS-2).

Respondents reported verbal, sexual, and physical aggression and physical injury that had been both inflicted and received from their spouses on the CTS-2 (Straus, Hamby, Boney and Sugarman, 1996). On the basis of previously developed criteria for defining male battering, the study will exclude couples with moderate to severe husband to wife domestic violence. Those couples will be referred to a violence related individual treatment.

#### Sentence Completion Series- Marriage (SCS-M).

The Sentence Completion Series- Marriage (SCS- M) is a semi projective method of gathering client information which has clinical utility as an adjunct to interviews and/or formal psychological testing. The series enhances the flexibility and range of clinical utilization of the sentence completion technique by providing content valid sentence (Aiken and Lah,1989). The Sentence Completion Series- Marriage (SCS- M) includes a 50 item Sentence Completion Series self- report form. Those topics included are: Expectations, Relationship, Commitment, Cohesion, Tension and Tensions Needs.

#### Marital Interaction Coding System (MICS)

The MICS will be scored to categorize behaviors into categories such as - complain, criticize, smile, interrupt, which will help the therapist determine the best therapeutic approach (Hops, Wills, Patterson, & Weiss, 1971).

#### Behavioral Couple Therapy (BCT)

BCT will be utilized to determine the collaborative set within the couple. Usually, members of a distressed relationship often focus on what their partner does that they do not like, rather than

on what they themselves can do to improve the relationship. The collaborative set will teach the couple to focus on changing themselves and their own behavior, rather than waiting for their partner to change.

### Behavior exchange (BE)

In this approach, the therapist will attempt to increase positive feelings towards each other (Jacobson & Margolin 1979). The couple will learn to listen and respect each other. Role play will be performed in order to reinforce behavior. Furthermore, the couple will learn to use positive verbal behavior and compliance. In addition, they will look at their anger that has built up over the years, and at the same time look at the different ways to express their anger.

### Movies

Movies of dysfunctional families compared to functional families will be shown to the couples. The couple will be asked to point out issues in the movie and to relate it to their lives. In the unfortunate event that the couple decides to get divorced, the program will provide sessions which will feature a movie to help with the process of the divorce. In the movie titled "The Children of Divorce", the narrator gives some advice to those parents who are considering divorce the advice pertains on how to effectively help your child thru the confusing times of divorce. Here are some of the tips that were generated throughout the movie:

1. Tell your child about the divorce. Alan J. Word quoted: "in more than half of all divorce cases, the children involved were not fully aware of what was going on. It is not to say that the children did not know that there was trouble in the relationship between the parents; they were unaware of the consequences involved."
2. The children, just like the parents, are emotionally hurt. Listening to their concerns and fears can

sometime be half of the solution. Debbie Murdock, a family court mediator says: "you need to reassure your child that what he or she is feeling is normal and that with time and effort things will get better."

3. It is crucial that the parents re-affirm their love for their children even more than normal.

Especially when the children have a guilty conscious feeling that somehow they were the cause for the break-up.

4. Never argue about the kids or try to use them as pawns or bribery, especially in front of them.

5. As a parent you should know that your child came from two parents. Therefore, never put them in the position where they are forced to choose or play favorites.

6. Try to tell your kids good things that might be associated with the divorce. Always reinforce a positive attitude.

## Procedure

Participants will be voluntarily assigned to the program, Marital Satisfaction. In order to activate the program the couple will first be given a preface form (see Appendix A). There have been a number of studies that have investigated the reliability and validity of the marital satisfaction tests including the MSI-2, DAS and MAT Fowers and Olson (1989). On the preface form participants will be asked to indicate their marital status. If the individual is not married, married for less than 3 years or more than 15 years and does not have children, those individuals will not be a good candidate for this program. The goal of this program is to find dysfunctional families and help them with the right tools to become a functional family. The couple in the program will then receive an informed consent form (see Appendix B). This form will explain in detail that the primary purpose for the program- to assess the unsatisfied individual within the marriage and to measure, with the right treatment plan, the level of satisfaction after treatment. The subjects will be informed that one of the tasks that will be required of them is to complete a pre and post test in order to evaluate their level of marital satisfaction. This process will be time consuming, and they will be informed that the duration of the program will last about 6 months. In addition, the consent form will explain the risks and benefits of them participating in the program. They will also be notified in the consent form of their right to withdraw from the program at any time.

Each participant will be tested individually in a room at the clinic. All tests will be administered with the same instructions and in the same order. None of the couples will be tested in the same room at the same time. After a series of marital satisfaction tests are completed, the subjects will have an interview as a couple to discuss the result of their satisfactions within the marriage and any future treatment plans (see Appendix C). If indeed, the couples test results are

indicative that each one is satisfied within the marriage they will be dismissed from the program; however, if even only one of the couple tested showed unsatisfied within the marriage, they will both qualify for the program. Finally, after 6 months of treatment the subjects will complete post tests in order to evaluate if the level of marital satisfaction differs from the pre tests that had been completed. The couples final results will be available for discussion with the therapist (see Appendix D).

In conclusion before making a decision, an individual needs to thinking about the past, reflecting on the present and considering the future, which can be one of the most critical decisions in life. Based on the data gathered, marital satisfaction can be increased with hard work with in the relationship. In addition, it is important to acknowledge, the fact, that many couples think that staying together for the children is the solution; However, if the couples are not happy and satisfied in their marriage, their children are not happy too.

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## APPENDIX A

### PREFACE FORM

Welcome to the program! In this program, we will be measuring the level of marital satisfaction before treatment and after treatment. The tests that will be given in this program are traditionally used as measures of one's true satisfaction within the marriage. The test will involve mostly written questions, verbal expressions, and it may also require you to receive individual, couple and group therapy. Thank you for your participation.

Please place an **X** To whichever applies to you in the following:

**Gender:** Male\_\_\_\_ Female\_\_\_\_

**Married Status:** Single\_\_\_\_ Married\_\_\_\_ Divorce\_\_\_\_ Separated\_\_\_\_ Widowed\_\_\_\_

**Married For:** 0-5 years\_\_\_\_ 5-10 years\_\_\_\_ 10-15 years\_\_\_\_ 15-25 years\_\_\_\_

**Annual Family Income:** <10,000\_\_\_\_ 20,000-30,000\_\_\_\_ 40,000-50,000\_\_\_\_

60,000-70,000\_\_\_\_ 80,000-90,000\_\_\_\_ >100,000\_\_\_\_

**Number of children:** 1\_\_ 2\_\_ 3\_\_ 4\_\_ >4\_\_ none\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX B

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

**Description:** The purpose of the current program design is to measure Marital Satisfaction before and after treatment. The measure will be include variation of tests, individual, group and couples therapy.

**Procedure:** The participants will be asked to complete a questionnaire, consisting of questions related to marital Satisfaction.

**Risk/Benefits:** There is little to minimal risk involved in participating in this program. The program will be a time consuming, it will take approximately six (6) months. All individual test scores will be kept anonymous, and the result will be discussed individually. The primary benefit of this program design is that the participants will have the opportunity for a healthy and happier marriage.

**Voluntary Participation and Right to Withdraw:** This research is completely voluntary, and for that reason, any and all the participants will have the right to withdraw from the program at any time with no penalty or consequence. In addition, the staff of the program will be available at any time to answer questions or concerns that the participants may have.

**Confidentiality:** The participants understands that all scores and data collected from his/her tests are confidential. It is important for the participants to understood that their name will not appear on the test results (only on the consent form). The participants will understood that, at any time, their name will **not** be identified in public

**Consent:** I have read this statement and agree to participate in the program under the conditions presented.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature (husband)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature (wife)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Appendix C**

TREATMENT PLAN

**APPENDIX D**  
**FINAL RESULTS**

## **APPENDIX E**

### **DEBRIEFING FORM**

The program was designed to measure marital satisfaction. The test scores of individual will be compared to their spouse in order to determine significant differences. If you have any question regarding the final results of the program, please feel free to contact Sigalit Perl, M.S. at 954-868-6943.

**Thank You for your time and participation in the program design!**