

MARITAL QUALITY IN AFRICAN AMERICAN MARITAL UNIONS:  
A CONTENT ANALYSIS STUDY

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## DEDICATION

All glory be to God in Jesus name! I am so thankful for the anointing that God has given me. To my grandfather (daddy) and my grandmother (madedear) that are no longer living on this earth, thank you both for given me an example of a marital union. Daddy, I thank you for being so kind to me and having the desire to give my wants to me. Madear, I thank you for the words “I knew you could do it” which has helped me educationally, as well as in life. To my precious mother that has returned to the Creator, thank you for the good that you have imparted in my life. Although you will not be at the physical graduation ceremony, you knew that I earned my Ph.D. before I did as you saw it in Heaven. To my precious son, you are such a wonderful person. I thank God for you.

To my church family, thank you for the encouraging words. You have inspired me even when you may not have known that I needed a word of encouragement.

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## ABSTRACT

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### MARITAL QUALITY IN AFRICAN AMERICAN MARITAL UNIONS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS STUDY

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The purpose of this study was to conduct a content analysis of the scholarly literature on marital quality in African American marital unions in 20 scholarly journals, and in TWU dissertations published from 2008-2018. This content analysis study used a combination of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods articles and one dissertation to achieve a better understanding of this topic. Five themes emerged after coding the identified journal articles and dissertation. Those themes include *Religion*, *Weakness Diminished by Strengths*, *Core Values*, *Commitment*, and *Satisfaction*. This content analysis study adds to the body of knowledge on marital quality, enhances the understanding of what couples reported has helped them form marital quality in their marital unions, and shares some themes that have emerged in the literature on marital quality in African American marital unions between 2008-2018.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Among the most influential ties in adulthood is the marital tie (Birditt & Antonucci, 2012). At some point in the lives of Americans, over 80% will get married (Bryant, Taylor, Lincoln, Chatters, & Jackson, 2008). The majority of adults become married for the first time between 20 years old and 44 years old (King & Allen, 2009). The desire to marry does not seem to be limited to Americans, as in most of the world marriage exists. This possibly is because of benefits that the marital institution can provide (Dixon, 2009). It has been established by researchers that people that are married have better physical health, psychological health (Stanik, McHale, & Crouter, 2013), and lower mortality rates compared to divorced, widowed, separated or single people (Berardo, 1990). In a review of more than 130 studies on marriage indicators of well-being, when comparing married people to unmarried people, generally married individuals were less stressed, and happier (Coombs, 1991). Despite this finding, Ellison, Henderson, Glenn, and Harkrider (2011) suggested that a majority of divorces happen after the couple has been married a few years.

Remarriage has become more common gradually over the last 25 years (Whitton, Stanley, Markman, & Johnson, 2013). In the 1970s, all the “family life-span studies” used a design that was cross-sectional (Spanier & Lewis, 1980, p. 829). The majority of these studies suggested that marriage followed the U-shaped pattern when considering

the time effect on marital quality (Spanier & Lewis, 1980). That is to say that happiness is high at the beginning, is less during the middle years, and in later life increases (Birditt & Antonucci, 2012). This may not be the case if the couple's marriage does not endure the middle years. Research suggests that remarriage divorce rates may be higher due to attitudes towards divorce (Whitton et al., 2013). Social psychological theories suggest that if a person has been divorced, that experience possibly has affected the individual's views toward a greater acceptance of divorce as a marital distress solution (Whitton et al., 2013). Diamond, Brimhall, and Elliott (2018) reported that statistics on remarriage show that numerous people frequently remarry quickly despite the difficulty of divorce.

Not every newlywed couple is the same. Some enter the marital union with both partners never having been married, while others may be in a marriage where one or both spouses are in a remarriage (Lewis & Kreider, 2015). Divorce not only affects the two individuals that are ending the marital union, it can also have consequences for future generations. Research suggested that adults with parents that have been divorced have a greater risk of divorce themselves (Segrin, Taylor, & Altman, 2005).

Although Americans are more likely to marry than couples in other western nations, it does not put Americans at a decreased risk of separating in a marriage (Saint-Jacques et al., 2016) or of remaining in one marriage for a lifetime (Lewis & Kreider, 2015). In the United States, the marriage context does not simply include if or when a person chooses to marry, but also if that person becomes married multiple times. In 2008, questions that ask about a person's marital history were added to the American

Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is the most reliable and largest source on demographics in the family that are changing (Hawkins, Amato, & Kinghorn, 2013).

The survey questions included if the adults had been married, divorced, or widowed in the past 12 months, the adult's number of marriages, and in the most recent union, how long the person had been married (Lewis & Kreider, 2015). The sample included males ( $n = 115,969,884$ ) and females ( $n = 124,129,728$ ) marital history by sex and age (15 years old and older) from 2008-2012. The data suggest that for the women 30 years old and over, most had been married, and men 30 years old and over, had been married as well.

The Lewis and Kreider (2015) reported, overall data from 2008-2012 on Hispanic origin and any race suggested that for men from 55 years old to 64 years old, 9% of non-Hispanic White men had three or more marriages. Black males (7%) had been married three or more times. Asian males (2%) had been married three or more times. Hispanic males (5%) had been married three or more times (Lewis & Kreider, 2015). For women from 55 years old to 64 years old there was a similar pattern. Nine percent of women that are non-Hispanic White had a minimum of three marriages in comparison to 4% of women that are Hispanic, 2% of women that are Asian, and 4% of women that are Black (Lewis & Kreider, 2015). Although there may be some concern of whether there is "a retreat from marriage," Lewis and Kreider's (2015) data suggest that it is still pursued by the majority of Americans (p. 2).

## **Statement of the Problem**

In the past half century, marriage in the United States has become progressively fragile (Ellison, Burdette, & Wilcox, 2010). Although changes in the United States as a whole has been influenced by quality of intimate relationships, basic features of intimate relationships, and stability of intimate relationships--from delaying age at first marriage, childbearing that did not occur during the marital union, cohabitation to divorce occurring more-- they are far reaching for ethnic and racial minorities, particularly for African Americans (Ellison et al., 2010). Since benefits may exist in marriage, one might think that people may want to marry and stay married regardless of race (Dixon, 2009). However, marriage research has mostly focused on middle-class white couples (Birditt & Antonucci, 2012). Ellison et al. (2010) suggested that marriages that do occur among African Americans have lower relationship quality experience and greater marital disruption (i.e., separation or divorce) risk than non-Hispanic Whites.

Family problems are commonplace in the American society and for over a quarter century, the rates of divorce have been extensive (DeFrain, 1999). In the field of family science, many have called for increasing the research on factors associated with remarital quality due to the widespread presence and discontinuation of unions that are higher order (Garneau, Higginbotham, & Adler-Baeder, 2015). There has been increasing scholarly attention toward Black and Hispanic parallels and causes of relationship quality and the differences by ethnicity and race in relationship quality (Ellison et al., 2010). However, there is uncertainty of what is done in strong marriages of African Americans when problems in the marriage are experienced (Vaterlaus, Skogrand, & Chaney, 2015).

Pinderhughes (2002) suggested that increasing studies on successfully married, long-term African American couples might inform understanding on how couples in general work out conflicts in marriage when stress happens.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to conduct a content analysis of the scholarly literature on marital quality in African American marital unions in 20 scholarly journals, and Texas Woman's University (TWU) dissertations published from 2008-2018. The 20 scholarly journals that were reviewed are:

<i>Contemporary Family Therapy</i>	<i>Journal of Family Studies</i>
<i>Family Process</i>	<i>Journal of Family Therapy</i>
<i>Family Relations</i>	<i>Journal of Marital and Family Therapy</i>
<i>Journal of African American Studies</i>	<i>Journal of Marriage and Family</i>
<i>Journal of Black Studies</i>	<i>Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development</i>
<i>Journal of Child and Family Studies</i>	<i>Personal Relationships</i>
<i>Journal of Couple &amp; Relationship Therapy</i>	<i>Psychotherapy</i>
<i>Journal of Divorce &amp; Remarriage</i>	<i>The American Journal of Family Therapy</i>
<i>Journal of Family Issues</i>	<i>The Journal of Black Psychology</i>
<i>Journal of Family Psychology</i>	<i>Women, Gender, and Families of Color</i>

## **Research Questions**

The following two research questions were addressed:

1. How do African American couples develop marital quality in their marital unions?
2. What are common themes that are emerging in the literature on marital quality in African American marital unions?

The research questions were used as a guide when selecting articles and dissertations, and collecting data. The following key terms were used when selecting articles: Black, Black remarriages, marital quality, African American, African American remarriages, remarried couples, remarriage, remarried African American couples, and remarriage\* OR remarrie\* OR marital quality\* (\* = truncation command to search plurals and synonyms). The search strategy was box one: (Black OR Black remarriages OR African American OR African American remarriages OR remarried African American couples) AND box two: (marital quality OR remarried couples OR remarriage) AND box three: (remarriage\* OR remarrie\* OR marital quality\*). African American marriages AND African American remarriages were used as keywords when selecting TWU dissertations.

## **Definition of Terms**

In this research, the terms are operationalized as follows:

- *Marital Quality* focuses on satisfaction, agreement, sharing, affection quantity, trust, friendship-based love, reflects commitment, happiness, and passionate love

(Bryant, Futris, Hicks, Lee, & Oshri, 2016; Doyle, Markiewicz, Brendgen, Lieberman, & Voss, 2000).

- *Marriage* is between two people. It is a legal contract or an agreement that is socially recognized. Religious institutions, family members, the legal system, and other members of society acknowledge the union (Waite, 2009).
- *Remarriage* encompasses relationships of different types-- the remarriage may be a second or higher order marriage (third marriage, fourth marriage, etc.) of one spouse, or both spouses may be in their second or higher order marriage and the people are currently legally married (Coleman, Ganong, & Fine, 2000; Shriner, 2009).
- *Black* is a term that usually is used for a person whose origins are of African ancestry. This term extends over a wide range of cultural backgrounds and ethnic backgrounds. This term can be unreliable and offensive (Agyemang, Bhopal, & Bruijnzeels, 2005).

### **Assumptions**

1. Minimal research exists on marital quality in African American marital unions.
2. Family therapists can benefit from research on marital quality in African American marital unions.
3. Author(s) of the selected journal articles and dissertation have presented their results as accurately as possible.

## **Delimitations**

This content analysis study only included themes from articles that were selected from 20 scholarly journals in selected databases and TWU dissertations published between 2008-2018. The search terms that were used included: Black, Black remarriages, marital quality, African American, African American remarriages, remarried couples, remarriage, remarried African American couples, and remarriage\* OR remarrie\* OR marital quality\* (\* = truncation command to search plurals and synonyms). The search strategy was box one: (Black OR Black remarriages OR African American OR African American remarriages OR remarried African American couples) AND box two: (marital quality OR remarried couples OR remarriage) AND box three: (remarriage\* OR remarrie\* OR marital quality\*). The search terms for TWU dissertations were African American marriages and African American remarriages.

## **Summary**

Marriage offers many benefits. Some benefits include physical, psychological, and improvement in mortality rates. Family problems however have become commonplace in the American society. In particular, the marital institution has been found to be a fragile system. How a positive attitude towards divorce can affect future marriages was considered as an explanation for the divorce rate. Family scientists have called for increasing the research on factors associated with marital quality due to the widespread presence and discontinuation of second, third, etc. marriages. In spite of there being concern for people withdrawing from marriage, Lewis and Kreider's (2015) data suggest that most Americans still pursue a marital union.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Chapter II provides a review of research on religion, marriage, divorce, remarriage, and the family strengths approach. The articles used in the research sample (2008-2018) were not included in this literature review. The literature review includes articles from several different journals, books, and encyclopedias.

#### **Religion**

Religion has a variety of meanings (Nelson, 2006). In the western cultural, traditionally, religion refers to the divine in every area of a person's life. However, in the 20th century, religion was redefined particularly in academic circles. New definitions refer to religion as corporate and individual practices and beliefs in our relationship with an ultimate reality or being and is different from spirituality (Nelson, 2006). Spirituality usually refers to the more observed part of that relationship, or more broadly to the person's search for meaning or core values. In the United States, it is common practice to place great value on both religion and spirituality. Some empirical work has begun to support the helpfulness of the distinction between religion and spirituality (Nelson, 2006).

Religion was a noteworthy factor in how a person chose a spouse in the early part of the 20th century (Cherlin, 2010). Empirical literature has established that religion in many families in America matters (Marks, Tanner, Nesteruk, Chaney, & Baumgartner, 2012). In the African American community, the Black church is of central importance

(Caldwell, Greene, & Billingsley, 1992). “A Black church is defined as one in which the majority of its members are Black and its leadership (i.e., the senior minister) is also Black” (Caldwell et al., 1992, p. 25). Marks et al. (2012), qualitative research sought to explain why influences of religion are meaningful for Black families and to identify how religion influences marriage with this population. The sample included 60 African American parents (included married and remarried couples). Findings suggest that meaningful aspects for this group were spiritual beliefs, religious practices, and faith community. However, this article only focused on the spiritual beliefs, as papers have or will be written about the other two aspects (faith community, religious practices).

The findings yielded six themes that addressed spiritual beliefs. Those findings included (1) “It’s more than a religion, it’s a relationship” (Marks et al., 2012, p. 699), (2) “It’s not a sacrifice”...” “It’s good stewardship” (p. 701), (3) “Faith gets you through the rough times” (p. 702), (4) “All things work together for good to them that love God” (p. 704), (5) “Our last breath on earth is our first breath with Him” (p. 705), and (6) “God ordained marriage and family” (p. 706). Theme 3 and 6 seem most appropriate for the research set out in this content analysis study. One participant perspective from Theme 3 is indicated as follows:

Some people... [that] don’t have a strong religious faith, they don’t know where to turn, so they turn to the bottle, alcohol, or drugs or whatever-- because they don’t know where [else] to turn. And I think those of us who are really deep in our faith and know the Lord, I think we know where our strength comes from.... We all have faced a lot of challenges in our lives, and I think when you’re going

through something, a major hurdle, major challenge in life, you look back on some of those past challenges and I say ... the Lord brought [me] through those, and I think that helps sustain me... He has brought me through. [...] Back to my mom's death. I think that was the most difficult situation that I've ever, ever had to contend with, and I think it made me realize, first of all, the power of God, because that was a situation that was very difficult for me and my family to get through and He has brought us through. We're still dealing with it and struggling with it, but... I can lean and depend on God (Marks et al., 2012, pp. 702-703).

The following reflects Theme 6:

Tanya: We know how God ordained marriage, and so we get to talk about that and share [that]... We want the same thing, and that's to be in the will of God. It [has] enhanced our marriage [to have the shared goal] (Marks et al., 2012, p. 708).

Annie: Our relationship, our marriage relationship, is based upon God, and our belief in the Lord. We look to each other for strength, but we know that ultimately, God is the center of our relationship and we know that He provides everything that we need. It's Him that holds it together (Marks et al., 2012, p. 708).

### **Marriage**

Marriage is distinctive from other less formal relationships. This is mainly because of the social recognition and legal status of the union (Waite, 2009). Marriage is a relationship that is complex between two individuals. The couple typically needs to

have tolerance for the differences that their partner has from their own or his/her direction is the same as their spouse (Stinnett & Walter, 1977). Marriage also seems to have benefits in the form of longevity, emotional health, and suicide rates that are lower compared to single people. Married people at every stage of life have a death rate that is lower. Factors that contribute a great deal to emotional health are the presence of someone that loves, cares, provides understanding, emotional support, and is a good companion (Stinnett & Walters, 1977).

There are many types of marriages that develop. Based on clinical observations and research from marriage and family therapist and psychiatrists, five certain basic types of marital relationships have developed. As relationships are not fixed, the couple may move from one type of relationship into another form of a relationship with the same spouse, however, this is rare. The marital relationship forms are passive-congenial, vital, devitalized, conflict-habituated, and total. A cyclical relationship is also a form that has been observed often (Stinnett & Walters, 1977).

A passive-congenial relationship is where the partners seem to be void and indifferent (Stinnett & Walters, 1977). Spouses' personal involvement has been very little since the beginning of the relationship. The couple engages in few activities with one another and do not seem to have a deep care for one another (Stinnett & Walters, 1977).

A vital relationship is where the spouses have experience togetherness and sharing that is genuine and an intense psychological connection (Stinnett & Walters, 1977). The spouses enjoy spending time together so much that an activity is more enjoyable when shared with the spouse. The companionship in this type of relationship is

seen as vital to the spouses. Conflicts are settled quickly in this type of relationship (Stinnett & Walters, 1977).

A devitalized relationship seems to be common (Stinnett & Walters, 1977). That is to say, as the relationship has continued the liveliness and satisfaction has declined. During the early years of the relationship, there was more closeness, satisfaction, and meaningfulness. As the years progressed, the time that the couple spends together seems to be more out of duty (going to kid's activities, entertaining, etc.). In this type of relationship, there is minimal overt conflict. The relationship has become void, lifeless, and indifferent (Stinnett & Walters, 1977).

In a conflict-habituated relationship, conflict and tension dominate the relationship (Stinnett & Walters, 1977). The spouse has the tendency to bring up mistakes that the partner has made in the past. Possibly the most unfortunate form of this type of relationship is when the spouses engage in a pattern of mocking one another, and tearing one another down generally in public and private (Stinnett & Walters, 1977).

The total relationship and the vital relationship are similar (Stinnett & Walters, 1977). The total relationship involves additional companionship and sharing. The different areas in the relationship are not in competition with one another, but enhance one another (Stinnett & Walters, 1977).

In a cyclical relationship, the spouses experience periods of dissatisfaction, failure to cope, and conflict (Stinnett & Walters, 1977). The relationship then has a period of calmness and happiness. To a degree, all marital relationships are cyclical (Stinnett & Walters, 1977).

Marriage is important in the community of African Americans (Cutrona et al., 2003), and is valued (Pinderhughes, 2002). However, in the United States, the Black marriage is in crisis (Malone-Colon, 2007). According to research, marriages in the African American population are likely to occur later in life, and the marriages remain together shorter than marriages that occur in their White counterparts (Dixon, 2009). There has been a relatively small amount of research done on African American marriages and the research findings that are available on the satisfaction levels of Black Americans are few (Cutrona et al., 2003). Few studies focus on processes that are interpersonal or on marital quality in African American marriages (Cutrona et al., 2003). Malone-Colon (2007) suggested that to date, limited analysis has been done on what adds to and takes away from African Americans' happiness and marital quality. Milardo (2000) suggested that more work was needed on relationship internal characteristics, that is to say what is actually done by the people in the relationship and on the emotional and mental character of the people in the relationship.

Cutrona et al. (2003) conducted research on marital quality perception and marital interactions predictors among married couples that are African American. The overall observed warmth scale included endearment, warmth/support, physical affection, reciprocation of warmth, prosocialness, listener responsiveness, escalation of warmth, communication, and assertiveness. The observed hostility scale included contempt, hostility, escalation of hostility, anger coercion, verbal attack, anti-socialness, reciprocation of hostility, physical attack, denial, interrogations, and lecturing/moralizing. Marital quality was measured using three measures. Marital satisfaction included the

degree that the couple was satisfied or happy with their marriage on a 6-point Likert scale. Marital stability included topics such as whether the spouse discussed the topic of divorce with a friend, and spoke about talking with a divorce lawyer. A 4-point scale was used. Satisfaction with spouse's child care and housework contributions used a 4-point scale. Financial strain was measured by: "unmet financial needs" (p. 395), which included did not have enough money to buy needed food; "Can't make ends meet" (p. 395), which included difficulty with paying bills; "Financial adjustments" (p. 395), which included having medical insurance eliminated or reduced due to problems with finances; and "Negative financial life events" (p. 395), which include work layoffs, and wage cuts.

Cutrona et al. (2003) found men overall rated marital quality higher than women. Both husbands and wives' financial strain was negatively correlated significantly with marital quality. Husbands' marital quality was positively correlated with wife warmth. Men marital quality was negatively associated with hostility. Warmth was associated positively with marital quality for women.

Berardo (1990) suggested there was concern that families and marriage were being threatened and weakened by the social changes (toward individualism from familism). Rogers and Amato (1997) suggested spouses that are individualistic in the marriage might not invest effort in resolving disagreements due to divorce being readily available. Rogers and Amato (1997) also postulated that one possible reason for an increasing amount of divorce might be due to the initiation of no-fault divorce also (Rogers & Amato, 1997).

## **Divorce**

In 1970, California no-fault divorce law became effective (Kay, 1987; Glick, 1988). The intention of this legislation was to lessen the deceitfulness and harshness in divorce proceedings. This legislation also made divorce easier to attain (Glick, 1988). The act in a large sense represented the first breakthrough in a moral and social deadlock over divorce (Kay, 1987). The California law was the first no-fault divorce law that was empirically studied (Kay, 1987).

California Family Law development, and other state laws since 1970, are different because the courts and legislature has extended the philosophy of no-fault that underlies the Family Law Act to different areas of family law (Kay, 1987). This has given Californians the latitude to uninhibited experimentation with different forms of family and functions without having any official imposed view of an appropriate family life (Kay, 1987). Present-day marriages are more likely to end by a divorce than by the death of one of the spouses in the marital union (Sweeney, 2010).

## **Remarriage**

Remarriage involves the uncommon occurrence of marrying the same partner a second time, or marrying a second or higher order time to a different person after the death of the first spouse or after a divorce from the first spouse (Olson & DeFrain, 2000). Until the 1970s, remarriage usually took place after a spouse died (Coleman & Ganong, 1990). In 1971, remarriages were 24% of all marriages, and in 1977, remarriages were 32% (Price-Bonham & Balswick, 1980). Remarriage has grown in society (Coleman &

Ganong, 1985). Of those persons that divorce before the age of 40, about 90% remarry (Stinnett & Walters, 1977).

Schmiege, Richards, and Zvonkovic (2001) suggested that most Americans desire marriage even if they have had a marriage that ended. In a few years after the divorce, the majority of people tend to remarry (Schmiege et al., 2001). Glick and Lin (1986) reported that usually those in the United States who divorce remarry eventually. For women remarriage and divorce seemed more likely when it was not disapproved of in the community and the family (Coleman & Ganong, 1990). In remarriage, one or both partners may enter the higher order union with a child/children, which will create a stepfamily for one or both of the partners.

In one qualitative study by Saint-Jacques et al. (2016), the authors investigated 26 adults from Quebec, Canada with most respondents' (1 married couple, 25 cohabiting, no ethnicity identified, 38.5% were stepparent and parents in their household, 58% included complex stepfamilies such as blended families) living in a household as a stepfamily 1-5 years before separation. The research questions included "(1) were there observable links between stepfamily breakup and the participants' family-of-origin experiences and previous marital relationships? (2) Can we identify major events or defining moments that are associated with the separation of the stepfamily couple? If so why was it that these events led to the break-up of the stepfamily couple?" (Saint-Jacques et al., 2016, p. 519).

In half of the respondents, findings included experiences in the family of origin associated with conflicts with parents' family violence, and marriage relationship. Some

of the couples when experiencing a similar difficulty in the stepfamily, had a feeling of already experiencing the situation, but the difference was that the respondent was experiencing it from a parental position. The respondent shared awareness of how a child could be impacted and shared that he/she did not want their child to experience the distress. Separation then seemed to be a way to protect their child. One respondent stated:

There was this time near the end of our relationship when we were fighting at night in the hallway. My daughter woke up crying and screaming “Mom!” as if she was looking for me. My boyfriend and I both grew up in violent homes and we remembered moments like that when there was this silence after a fight and thought one of our parents was dead. So, this moment with my daughter was a strong wake-up call and we considered breaking up. We couldn’t let another child experience what we had gone through, it was too much to bear. (Jennifer) (Saint-Jacques et al., 2016, p. 527).

If the couple had the belief that the relationship would not survive when problems occurred they put an end to the relationship (Saint-Jacques et al., 2016). One participant explained:

It’s always like that, I don’t know why. Maybe there comes a point when, you know, we become lazy about the relationship. The beginning is always exciting, it’s always fun and new. And then a time comes when you prefer to stay at home, both of us go back to our old patterns, our old habits, and we start slowly moving apart. We reach this point when we’re no longer on the same wavelength, she’s there and I’m here. I don’t know why but it’s always been the same for me. I

don't see any change; it always turns out the same way. (Joel) (Saint-Jacques et al., 2016, p. 530).

One participant stated from "major events that happened during the stepfamily period and processes that come into play" (Saint-Jacques et al., 2016, p. 531):

After Sarah was born, you know, she didn't start sleeping through the night until she was at least two and a half years old. We had big shadows under our eyes, in fact he [her partner] wasn't getting any sleep. After I gave birth, I hardly had time to take a shower and eat breakfast, in 20 minutes she was awake, and things started to build up. I don't know whether it was all that accumulated fatigue that caused his symptoms to appear [her partner developed serious mental health problems], but after that, it never stopped, it certainly didn't go back to the way it was before. (Diana) (Saint-Jacques et al., 2016, p. 532).

Remarriage does not have institutional norms as first marriages. As a result, if a person divorce and then enters a remarriage, that could be considered behavior that is noninstitutional (Price-Bonham & Balswick, 1980). Hence, there are myths associated with remarriage. In one article, Coleman and Ganong (1985) outlined myths associated with remarriage. Myths are held firmly, but oversimplified beliefs that guide expectations and perceptions (Coleman & Ganong, 1985). The problem with a myth is a person can use the myth as a blinder to experiences, which leads them into situations that could have possibly been prevented (Coleman & Ganong, 1985).

The remarried myths that are outlined in this article are derived from the authors' conducting research on remarriages, teaching courses at the graduate level on

stepfamilies and remarriages, and leading workshops on remarriage experience. In the article, the authors' point out that the eight myths listed were not an exhaustive list.

### **Myth One**

“Things must work out” (Coleman & Ganong, 1985, p. 117). For some remarried couples the goal is to “get it right” (p. 117). There may be an attempt to make decisions in the remarriage that are completely different from the first marriage or to make slightly different decisions. For example, in the first marriage there may have been many groomsmen and bridesmaids and in the remarriage there may have been one or two groomsmen and bridesmaids or the couple may have wed in a church during the first marriage and in the remarriage may have wed at the courthouse.

### **Myth Two**

“Always consider everybody first” (Coleman & Ganong, 1985, p. 117). This myth is when the person is pulled cognitively in different directions. The person may think the marriage should always come first, he/she should always come first, the other person should always come first, always consider you and your children first, not your spouse and his/her children, or that everyone should always come first. This myth may prompt the person to have feelings of frustration.

### **Myth Three**

“Keep criticism to oneself and focus on the positive” (Coleman & Ganong, 1985, p. 117). In an attempt to get the marriage right this time, the spouse does not share true thoughts or voice disagreements in hopes to prevent the marriage from failing. This can lead to alienation and powerlessness, not unity.

#### **Myth Four**

“If things are not going well, focus on what went wrong in the past and make sure it does not happen again” (Coleman & Ganong, 1985, p.117). This restricts communication openness. It is an attempt to not duplicate the past relationship instead of creating a relationship that is beneficial and unique to the two spouses in the remarriage.

#### **Myth Five**

“See oneself as part of the couple first, as an individual second; see oneself as an individual first, as part of a couple second” (Coleman & Ganong, 1985, p. 117). This myth is two-fold. First, the spouse sees himself/herself as having security in the remarriage. Secondly, the spouse sees himself/herself with a need to show self-preservation. Some spouses that have children and were single-parents see themselves as an individual second and a parent first. This parental role belief may be difficult to stop or never realized for the spouse.

#### **Myth Six**

“What is mine is mine, what is yours is yours” (Coleman & Ganong, 1985, p. 117). This myth seems to follow the course of marriage (mine is yours), divorce (yours is mine), single-parent (mine is mine), and remarriage (mine is mine yours is yours). There is no sense of ours in the remarriage. This myth in particular is shown by those that have thoughts of being hurt legally, emotionally, or financially in their past marital relationship. This myth sometimes can lead to less commitment and trust in the remarriage.

### **Myth Seven**

“Marriage makes people significantly happier” (Coleman & Ganong, 1985, p. 118). This myth states that the spouses must be happier in the remarriage than they were in their first marriage. This myth speaks of instant love for the spouse and his/her children if the spouse has children. This myth may cause misunderstandings. The spouse may seek others to blame or begin to think that the remarriage will also end in divorce if happiness in the remarriage does not happen fast enough.

### **Myth Eight**

“What is best for us must be harmful for the children” (Coleman & Ganong, 1985, p. 118). Those that believe this myth think that their children are harmed by the parent’s remarriage, but convince themselves that a family with two-parents is a solution for difficulties.

### **Strength-Based Approach**

In the 20th century, much of the research was based on troubled families. The question was “Why do families fail” (DeFrain, 1999, p. 6). Indeed, it has been proven throughout the millennia that for humans loving one another can be difficult (DeFrain, 1999). There is a need to know about problems in the families, however, we need a more balanced view (Stinnett, Chesser, & DeFrain, 1979). A different approach is to answer the question of “How do families succeed?” (DeFrain, 1999, p. 6). This approach can be done by putting the focus on families that are doing well (DeFrain, 1999).

There have been many terms that clinicians, laypeople, and researchers use for families that are doing well (DeFrain, 1999). The terms include successful families,

strong families, emotionally healthy, etc. The theme that underlines these descriptions is that there is a belief by members in the family that satisfaction with one another exists, and that the family is functioning well together (DeFrain, 1999).

The family strength model is one model that can be used to study healthy families. The Family Strengths Research Project in Oklahoma was conducted to ascertain characteristics that are shown in strong families. All families (sample 130 families) in the study included a wife, a husband, and a minimal of one child living in the home (Stinnett et al., 1979). After analysis, six general qualities stood out that the families had in common that seemed to have played an important role in the happiness and strength of these families (Stinnett et al., 1979). Those qualities include appreciation and affection, spending time together, commitment, spiritual well-being/high degree of spiritual orientation, positive communication/good communication patterns, and ability to manage crisis and stress/ability to deal with crises in a positive manner (DeFrain, 1999; Stinnett et al., 1979).

Appreciation and affection is when the members in the family care deeply and express a lot of appreciation for one another. This is made known to the members often. However, in some cultures openly expressing appreciation and affection is not common (DeFrain, 1999; Stinnett et al., 1979).

Spending time together is doing things together that is enjoyed by everyone. Strong families experience quality time in large quantities. The families structure their lives to spend time together in every area of their lives (eating meals together, recreation) (DeFrain, 1999; Stinnett et al., 1979).

Commitment is when it is clear to others that the members of the family are important (DeFrain, 1999). The families were committed deeply to the welfare and happiness of its members (Stinnett et al., 1979). A crucial part of commitment is that of sexual fidelity. It is key to mention that a marriage can become a strong unit without a major crisis occurring (DeFrain, 1999).

Spiritual well-being is about connection. Connection with what is sacred and a connection to one another (DeFrain, 1999). These families often went to church and did religious activities together (Stinnett et al., 1979).

Positive communication is when family members speak to one another honestly and directly about conflicts and differences without condemning or blaming one another (DeFrain, 1999). These families talk and listen with one another (Stinnett et al., 1979). Strong families ask questions and do not try to mind-read other family members' thoughts (DeFrain, 1999). When these families disagree, they talk about the disagreement, and try to find a solution that is best for everyone (Stinnett et al., 1979). Troubled families either avoid verbal conflict and deny that problems exist, or are overly hostile and critical when communicating with one another (DeFrain, 1999).

Ability to handle crisis and stress is not a quality that strong families are immune to, but they tend to be less prone to crisis than the likelihood that troubled families have. They handle problems and crisis in a positive manner (Stinnett et al., 1979). Since some stressors in life occur inevitably, the family can look for opportunities of growth in the process (DeFrain, 1999).

One of the advantages of looking at families from the family strength perspective is to focus on how families can be successful instead of on why families fail (DeFrain, 1999). Looking at families from a failing perspective can limit what is seen in families. However, if educators, therapists, researchers look for strengths of the family and identify them, those strengths can be used as a foundation for positive change in society and the family (DeFrain, 1999). Hence, strong families can serve as role models for others who want to create relationships that are healthy with ones that they love (DeFrain, 1999).

### **Summary**

Before the 1970s, remarriage typically took place after the death of a spouse. However, marriages of today are more likely to happen after a divorce. Researchers suggested that marriage is still desired by the majority of Americans in spite of having a marriage that ended. Although African Americans view marriage favorably, little research on marriage within the African American population has been done.

The family strength model can be used to identify factors that are shown in healthy families. Indeed, Stinnett et al. (1979), suggested “We don’t learn how to do anything looking only at how it shouldn’t be done. We learn most effectively by examining how to do something correctly and studying a positive model. We have not had this positive model as much as we need in the area of family life” (p. 24).

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

In Chapter III, information is provided on the research design for this study as well as the role that theory plays in this study will be outlined. The population will be described with information from each journal given. The sample, data collection, coding categories, treatment of data, credibility and trustworthiness, and role of researcher will also be discussed.

#### **Research Design**

Content analysis is best thought of as a method, analytic strategy, and an overall approach (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Content analysis involves a systematic examination of communication forms to document patterns objectively. It is an unobtrusive method of research. In unobtrusive research the researcher does not affect the social research while studying it because the raw material has already taken place (e.g., article has been written, book has been written, speech has been spoken, etc.; Babbie, 2004). Any form of communication can be used as the raw material for a content analysis (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Babbie (2004) suggested that content analysis requires “a thoughtful handling of the “what” that is being communicated” (p. 314).

Content analysis is also known as “grounded” inductive procedures used for pattern identification in a variety of qualitative data (Stone, 2001, p. 4). Typically, qualitative researchers discuss their findings in the form of themes (Biklen & Casella, 2007). Themes are “ideas around which data cluster that have emerged from work with

informants” (Biklen & Casella, 2007, p. 84). In the case of this content analysis study, the selected scholarly articles and dissertation will be the informants.

### **Role of Theory**

In content analysis, theory can play three possible roles: inductive, deductive, and no role (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). *Inductive role*, or induction, begins with processing the content carefully then moves to generalizing empirically which is a scientific method (Babbie, 2004; Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). When using inductive logic, the researcher reasons from the particular statement to general statements then ultimately to theory (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Inductive reasoning uses specific cases and observations to make general principles and inferences (American Psychological Association [APA], 2009). Qualitative researchers’ tendency is to see themselves as inductive researchers, that is to say qualitative researchers, regularly speak of data-supported themes (Biklen & Casella, 2007). *Deductive role*, or deduction, is when the researcher begins with a theory (Babbie, 2004; Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). When using deductive reasoning, the researcher starts with the theory and then tests the applicability of the theory (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Using deductive reasoning in empirical sciences is when predictions come from theories or general laws (APA, 2009). *No role* of theory in content analysis is to describe what is being analyzed in the content (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). Many content analysis researchers do not begin with a hypothesis, instead they search the data carefully for patterns (Stone, 2001).

The no role of theory was used for this content analysis study. This approach was appropriate since the primary researcher and coder were to describe what was being

analyzed in the content. Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999) argued that theory does not have to be involved to have a well-designed content analysis and results of the content analysis can be useful.

### **Population**

The population included Texas Woman's University (TWU) dissertations and selected scholarly journals. The dissertations reviewed were from Dissertations & Theses at Texas Woman's University (ProQuest) and the scholarly journals included:

<i>Contemporary Family Therapy</i>	<i>Journal of Family Studies</i>
<i>Family Process</i>	<i>Journal of Family Therapy</i>
<i>Family Relations</i>	<i>Journal of Marital and Family Therapy</i>
<i>Journal of African American Studies</i>	<i>Journal of Marriage and Family</i>
<i>Journal of Black Studies</i>	<i>Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development</i>
<i>Journal of Child and Family Studies</i>	<i>Personal Relationships</i>
<i>Journal of Couple &amp; Relationship Therapy</i>	<i>Psychotherapy</i>
<i>Journal of Divorce &amp; Remarriage</i>	<i>The American Journal of Family Therapy</i>
<i>Journal of Family Issues</i>	<i>The Journal of Black Psychology</i>
<i>Journal of Family Psychology</i>	<i>Women, Gender, and Families of Color</i>

*Contemporary Family Therapy: An International Journal* is published by Springer New York, LLC. This academic/scholarly journal start year was 1979 and it is distributed quarterly in the United States. This journal set forth in words the most current practice, theory, and research which place importance on family examination that is within the social economic environment of which it is an essential part.

*Family Process* is published by Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, Inc. This academic/scholarly journal start year was 1962 and it is distributed quarterly in the United States. This journal directs attention to psychotherapy and family mental health.

*Family Relations: Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies* is published by Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, Inc. This academic/scholarly journal start year was 1952 and it is distributed five times a year in the United States. This journal covers how scholarly articles can be put to practical use with importance over the life cycle relationships of the family for education, public policy, and intervention suggestions.

*Journal of African American Studies* is published by Springer New York, LLC. This academic/scholarly journal start year was 1993 and it is distributed quarterly in the United States. This journal attempts to act as a forum that is multidisciplinary for social scientists that analyze the wins and the struggles of males that are Black.

*Journal of Black Studies* is published by Sage Publications, Inc. This academic/scholarly journal start year was 1970 and it is distributed eight times a year in the United States. This journal discusses full philosophical, political, sociological, historical writing, and economic issues that are basic principles related to African Americans.

*Journal of Child and Family Studies* is published by Springer New York, LLC. This academic/scholarly journal start year was 1992 and it is distributed monthly in the United States. This journal spotlights papers that are original on policy issues, basic and applied research, service delivery, and on program evaluation.

*Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy: Innovations in Clinical and Educational Interventions* is published by Routledge. This academic/scholarly journal start year was 2001 and it is distributed quarterly in the United States. This journal gives attention to intimacy and human bonding study for therapist, marriage, clinical practitioners, couples, and family.

*Journal of Divorce & Remarriage: Research and Clinical Studies in Family Theory, Family Law, Family Mediation and Family Therapy* is published by Routledge. This academic/scholarly journal start year was 1977 and it is distributed eight times a year in the United States. This journal introduces interdisciplinary findings that are current on all divorce aspects from practice that is clinical to research that is relevant and to theory.

*Journal of Family Issues* is published by Sage Publications, Inc. This academic/scholarly journal start year was 1980 and it is distributed 16 times a year in the United States. This journal covers social issues that are contemporary, as well as family life problems and marriage problems. It also covers professional issues and theoretical issues that are of current interest to people that study and work with families.

*Journal of Family Psychology* is published by the American Psychological Association. This academic/scholarly journal start year was 1987 and it is distributed

eight times a year in the United States. This journal gives different views on family systems study, stressing research that is empirical on a broad range of topics that are family related.

*Journal of Family Studies* is published by Routledge. This academic/scholarly journal start year was 1980 and it is distributed four times a year three/year until 2019 in Australia. This journal intends to bring the best practices and research that is available together to support families and children through transitional periods, particularly when the periods are associated with conflict levels that are high.

*Journal of Family Therapy* is published by Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Ltd. This academic/scholarly journal start year was 1979 and it is distributed quarterly in the United Kingdom. This journal moves forward human relationships treatment and understanding that are formed in systems including couples, professional networks, wider groups, and families by article publications on training and clinical practice, theory, and research.

*Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* is published by Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, Inc. This academic/scholarly journal is distributed quarterly in the United States. This journal contributes knowledge about family and marital functioning and psychotherapeutic treatment that is most effective with family suffering and couple suffering.

*Journal of Marriage and Family* is published by Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, Inc. This academic/scholarly journal start year was 1939 and it is distributed five times a year plus supp. in the United States. This journal gives a place for interpretation of research

and evaluative discussion, and to cover theory on topics that are related to the family and marriage.

*Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development* is published by Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, Inc. This academic/scholarly journal start year was 1972 and it is distributed quarterly in the United States. This journal covers multicultural counseling state-of-the-art research and reports how the latest concepts and theoretical ideas can be used.

*Personal Relationships* is published by Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, Inc. This academic/scholarly journal start year was 1994 and it is distributed quarterly in the United States. This journal assists learning of a high level in personal relationships through a wide range of disciplines consisting of family studies, psychiatry, sociology, communication studies, psychology, and anthropology.

*Psychotherapy* is published by the American Psychological Association. This academic/scholarly journal start year was 1963 and it is distributed quarterly in the United States. This journal provides a number of different articles appropriate to the psychotherapy field, from both research studies and theoretical contributions.

*The American Journal of Family Therapy* is published by Routledge. This academic/scholarly journal start year was 1973 and it is distributed five times a year in the United States. This journal supplies a place that is interdisciplinary for theory, clinical practice and research in family therapy, and for new methods.

*The Journal of Black Psychology* is published by Sage Publications, Inc. This academic/scholarly journal start year was 1974 and it is distributed eight times a year in

the United States. This journal publishes in the psychology field contributions that are scholarly on Black and minorities from a perspective that is Afrocentrist concerning personality, child development, cognition, education, clinical application, and social behavior.

*Women, Gender, and Families of Color* is published by the University of Illinois Press. This academic/scholarly journal start year was 2013 and it is distributed semi-annually in the United States. This journal covers Black, Asian American, Indigenous, and Latina families study, gender study, and women study. This journal publishes empirical research and theoretical research from behavioral and social sciences, history, and humanities which include research that extends across national boundaries and comparison research and detailed examination within the United States on political, domestic social, economic, and cultural policies and practices.

### **Sample**

Using the specified search criteria, there were a total of 1,661 articles and 17 TWU dissertations found. However, only three articles and one dissertation were selected for this content analysis study. The other articles were not selected because they were about stepfather-stepchildren relationships, cohabitation affecting marital quality, economic issues, etc., or did not address the two specified research questions. The other dissertations were not selected because they included multiple ethnicities or did not address the two specified research questions. The sample included one qualitative article, one quantitative article, one mixed methods article, and one qualitative dissertation.

### **Data Collection**

The primary researcher searched for articles by reviewing selected databases one by one, selected years for this research, clicked peer reviewed, clicked full text (if option was available), and used the search strategy (box one – box three) for this study. The databases used were Academic Search Complete, Child Development & Adolescent Studies, Communication Abstracts, ERIC/Ebsco, Education Source, Family & Society Studies Worldwide, Family Studies Abstracts, JSTOR, MasterFILE Complete, Project Muse, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, Sage Journals Online, SocINDEX with Full Text, and Women's Studies International. The primary researcher searched for TWU dissertations using Dissertations & Theses at Texas Woman's University (ProQuest). Only articles that were written in English and peer reviewed or a TWU dissertation were included in this study. This study did not include information from magazine articles, and newspapers. Although cohabitation was included in some of the selected articles, cohabitation was not the focus for this content analysis study.

### **Coding Categories**

Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999) stated, "that content analysis in communication was a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (p. 259). Manifest content is that which can be easily seen or what is on the surface, such as gender and eyes blinking. Some researchers move from using manifest content to analyzing latent content. Latent content looks at the meaning of the message that underlies the elements on the surface.

Although latent content can be extensive, Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999) focused on content patterns and on interpretations from the coders of the meaning in the content. These forms of latent content analysis are dependent on coder schema and content cues (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). A schema is “a collection of basic knowledge about a concept or entity that serves as a guide to perception, interpretation, imagination, or problem solving” (APA, 2009, p. 365). How these two forms are differentiated involves what is being more emphasized (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999).

In projective content, the researcher places priority with judgments of the coders. The viewer has to use their mental preexisting schema to infer meaning from the content (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). This study followed the projective approach to code the content in the journal articles and dissertation.

The primary researcher and the coder coded the selected three articles and one dissertation using a coding manual (see Appendix A). See Appendix B for the selected articles, dissertation, and where the articles and dissertation can be found.

### **Treatment of Data**

The goal of the researcher using the projective content approach to code content is to describe rules to use when coding that cues coders to look for particular content elements that will prompt all coders to evoke a psychological schema that is the same (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). When all coders call forth the psychological schema that is the same and coding decisions that are the same, high reliability ensues. In this content analysis, the primary researcher (first coder) compared her coding table with the second coder’s (Ph.D. graduate in the Family Therapy program) coding table. Potter

and Levine-Donnerstein (1999) suggest, when findings are generated that connect to the psychological schema that the general public shares, high validity occurs. “The key to good coding of projective content is not for designers to construct more rules and further elaborate on pattern content procedures; instead the key is efficiently triggering access to schema” (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, p. 266).

For this content analysis study, the primary researcher e-mailed the coder a copy of the selected scholarly journal articles to review. The research questions were forwarded to the second coder prior to the primary researcher and the second coder, face-to-face meeting. At the face-to-face meeting, the primary researcher and second coder used the coding table to code parts of one article (Phillips, Wilmoth, & Marks, 2012) together to help with understanding of the coding format and to ask any additional questions that may have been needed during the coding process. During the face-to-face meeting if any additions/corrections to the coding table were needed, it took place at that time, and if any additions/corrections needed to occur afterwards, the primary researcher and second coder e-mailed one another. The following indicates the process for the coding of articles and dissertation:

*Week One (face-to-face meeting):* The primary researcher and the second coder reviewed and coded information from the Phillips et al., (2012) article.

*Week Two:* The primary researcher and the second coder e-mailed one another the coding table that each completed individually.

*Week Three:* The primary researcher combined the themes from the primary researcher and the second coder, making any deletion of examples that did not

seem to fit from her viewpoint. The primary researcher and second coder spoke via telephone concerning the theme names and illustrations. The primary researcher forwarded an e-mail to the second coder to make comments on themes and illustrations and asked her to return the document to the primary researcher in an e-mail. See Appendix A for the coding table.

*During or around Week Four:* The second coder e-mailed her acceptance of the illustrations listed under the themes to the primary researcher.

*Later search:* Since there were only three articles found that related to the research questions, a later search of TWU dissertations ensued. The key words included African American marriages, and African American remarriages. The primary researcher selected Full Text. The specific date range was 2008-2018. The total dissertations found were 17. Out of the 17 dissertations, one dissertation was selected. That dissertation was read and coded by the primary researcher (first coder) and the second coder.

The selected scholarly articles and dissertation used for this content analysis study are listed in Table 1 and an asterisk is next to the articles/dissertation in the reference list.

Table 1

*Scholarly Articles and Dissertation*

Author(s)	Year	Article/Dissertation Name	Journal	Volume	Number	Page Number(s)
Lincoln, K. D., & Chae, D. H.	2010	Stress, marital satisfaction, and psychological	<i>Journal of Family Issues</i>	31	8	1081-1105

distress among  
African Americans

Maddox, M.	2013	Perceptions of committed marriages in African American heterosexual couples married 25 years and longer	<i>TWU dissertation</i>			iii-154
Marks, L. D., Hopkins, K., Chaney, C., Monroe, P. A., Nesteruk, O., & Sasser, D. D.	2008	“Together, we are strong”: A qualitative study of happy, enduring African American marriages	<i>Family Relations</i>	57	2	172-185
Phillips, T. M., Wilmoth, J. D., & Marks, L. D.	2012	Challenges and conflicts... strengths and supports: A study of enduring African American marriages	<i>Journal of Black Studies</i>	43	8	936-952

### Credibility and Trustworthiness

Qualitative content analysis is used to understand how certain issues are managed by analyzing and recording text that is visual or analyzing and recording different print forms (Biklen & Casella, 2007). A particular audience perspective must be considered for

research to be considered qualitative (Biklen & Casella, 2007). In the case of this study, African American marital unions were the topic.

To combat against potential bias in this study, an analyst triangulation was used. Using analyst triangulation can reduce bias potential that can come from one person doing all of the collecting and analyzing of the data (Patton, 1999). Analyst triangulation is the term for multiple analysts used to review findings (Patton, 1999). Thus, in addition to the primary researcher of this content analyst study, there was one coder, and the chair for this content analysis oversaw this study.

The second coder is a Ph.D. graduate from Texas Woman's University in the Family Therapy program. She has completed advanced quantitative research methods in family science, and qualitative research, at the Ph.D. level. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor-Intern. Both the primary researcher and the second coder coded the articles and dissertation individually. Research has shown that having paired coders may cause the reader to feel that the pairing has the tendency to increase agreement percentages (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999).

### **Role of Researcher**

In a review that is qualitative, the researcher is the instrument. Hence, information about the researcher must be included in a report that is qualitative (Patton, 1999). Therefore, it is important to give information about the primary researcher who is also the first coder of this content analysis study.

I am an African American married female, and a doctoral candidate at Texas Woman's University in the Family Therapy program. I have completed a qualitative

research course, and advanced quantitative research methods in family science course, both at the Ph.D. level. I am a Licensed Professional Counselor-Supervisor, National Certified Counselor, and a Licensed Sex Offender Treatment Provider. I acknowledged that I have biases in the area of African American marital unions. I set my biases aside by consulting with the chair of my dissertation committee throughout the dissertation process so that I had an open mind on what the literature suggested. I also enlisted the assistance of a second coder to combat bias.

### **Summary**

Chapter III covered the research methodology that was used for this study. The role that theory had in this content analysis study is spelled out. The 20 scholarly journals that were used to collect information on marital quality in African American marital unions are listed with details given about each journal. A step-by-step description of how data were coded is described. The use of analyst triangulation was used for this content analysis study to combat against potential biases. This chapter draws to a close as I provide information about myself and how I fought against biases.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESULTS**

This content analysis study addressed marital quality in African American marital unions. The research questions were: Research Question 1: How do African American couples develop marital quality in their marital unions? Research Question 2: What are common themes that are emerging in the literature on marital quality in African American marital unions? Each scholarly article and dissertation is summarized with results reported for each article and dissertation. Table 2, Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5 represent the demographics for each article and dissertation selected for this content analysis study. Table 6 represents the themes for this study.

#### **Scholarly Research Article 1**

Lincoln and Chae (2010) conducted a quantitative research study. This article was about how psychological distress can be caused by financial strain and discrimination. Measures included psychological distress, marital satisfaction, unfair treatment, financial strain, and demographic information.

Lincoln and Chae (2010) investigated “the extent to which the experience of stress, in the form of financial strain and unfair treatment, is associated with marital satisfaction” (p. 1083). Lincoln and Chae (2010) examined “whether marital satisfaction moderates the influence of stress on psychological distress” (p.1083), examined “the degree to which financial strain exacerbates the impact of experiences of unfair treatment

on marital satisfaction and psychological distress among African Americans” (p. 1083). Lincoln and Chae (2010) specifically examined “ (a) the relationships among financial strain, unfair treatment, and marital satisfaction; (b) the extent to which marital satisfaction buffers the influence of financial strain and unfair treatment on psychological distress; and (c) the extent to which financial strain exacerbates the effects of unfair treatment on psychological distress” (p. 1096).

The participants derived from the National Survey of American Life (NSAL). This is a cross-sectional, national study of Caribbean Blacks and African Americans. The recruited participants for the NSAL were 1,621 adult Caribbean Blacks and 3,570 adults that are African American. The recruiting took place between February 2001 through June 2003. The focus of this study was on African Americans; therefore, only this group (962 participants, 444 men, 518 women) who stated they were in a marriage were considered.

## **Results**

Descriptive analyses showed:

- 95% of the participants were satisfied with their marriage.
- 69.1% (which is the majority) being very satisfied.
- 1.6% of the participants reported being very dissatisfied.
- The unfair treatment mean score showed an average of the participants that experienced the 10 routine unfair treatment forms (“being treated with less courtesy and less respect, receiving poorer service, other people acting afraid of you or as if they are better than you, being perceived as less smart or dishonest,

being insulted, threatened, and followed around in stores” (Lincoln & Chae, 2010, pp. 1087-1088) was “once a year and a few times a year” (p. 1090).

- 10.7% reported not experiencing any unfair treatment in the assessed domains.
- The majority of the participants reported some strain financially.
- 39.5% did not report financial strain.
- Lower marital satisfaction levels were reported when unfair treatment was greater.

Significant covariates:

- Gender - Men reported higher marital satisfaction than women.
- Education (fewer than 12 years) – Participants with fewer than 12 years of education reported higher levels of marital satisfaction than those with higher levels of education.
- Work status - Those in the work force reported lower levels of marital satisfaction compared to those not in the work force.
- Financial strain - Those with lower levels of financial strain had significantly higher levels of marital satisfaction.
- Gender and Education - Men reported higher levels of marital satisfaction than women. Those with education less than 12 years reported higher marital satisfaction than participants with higher education levels.
- When including financial strain and unfair treatment in the model, unfair treatment was not significant, but financial strain was still significant in marital satisfaction prediction.

“Linear Regressions Predicting Psychological Distress” (Lincoln & Chae, 2010, p. 1092):

- Lower levels of psychological distress were associated with marital satisfaction that was greater.
- Financial strain and unfair treatment levels that were higher had levels that were higher on associations with psychological distress.

Whether satisfaction in marriage buffered the effects that were negative pertaining to financial strain and unfair treatment:

- The size of the psychological distress and unfair treatment associations was more for those with less marital satisfaction versus those with increased marital satisfaction.
- The size of the psychological distress and financial strain associations was less for those with less marital satisfaction in comparison to those with more marital satisfaction.

Adding in Model 3 interaction between financial strain and unfair treatment:

- The effect of unfair treatment on psychological distress was less for people with low levels of financial strain.
- Unfair treatment and marital satisfaction were not significant anymore.
- Education was significant (16 or more years of education and 12 educational years). Those with 16 or more years of education and 12 educational years reported psychological distress with levels that were lower in comparison to people with education less than 12 years.

- Work status - Those not working reported levels that were higher on distress that was psychological compared to those in the labor force.
- Predicted values indicated the negative effect of treatment that is unfair was buffered by marital satisfaction.
- Greater marital satisfaction protective effect on psychological distress was lesser for people that had high levels of financial strain, in comparison to, the participants with low levels of financial strain.
- The unfavorable effect of unfair treatment on psychological distress was worse for participants with levels that were high on financial strain in comparison to the participants with levels that were low on financial strain.

Table 2

*Demographics for Lincoln & Chae (2010) Article*

*	Men	Women	Additional Information
Participants	444 African Americans	518 African Americans	One eligible participant per household  Interviewed in English  Participants were obtained from the National Survey of American Life (NSAL)
Age	Mean = 45.97	Mean = 45.97	
Marriage	Number of years married = 15.87	Number of years married = 15.87	Married one time = 707

	Married two or more times = 250
Spouse Children	No other children = 568
	Has other children = 389
Biological Children	None = 94
	One = 166
	Two = 254
	Three or more = 441
Education	Less than 12 years = 195
	12 years = 350
	13-15 years = 245
	16 or more = 172
Work Status	Working = 206
	Not Working = 52
	Out of Labor Force (retirement, injury) = 203
Region	North Central = 93
	Midwest = 135
	South = 681
	West = 53

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## **TWU Dissertation**

Maddox (2013) conducted a qualitative dissertation using a phenomenological approach. This dissertation is about the perceived life experiences of heterosexual African American couples that have led them to have long-term marriages. The measure included semi-structured interviews. Data were collected using face-to-face, in-depth interviews, and predetermined open-ended questions. The interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and analyzed to determine what themes emerged. The researcher took additional notes in the course of the interview to capture observations, and the feelings and thoughts of the researcher. The participants completed a consent form and demographic information before the interview began.

Maddox (2013) research questions were:

1) What does marriage mean to you? 2) What do African Americans attribute to the longevity of a marriage? 3) What family values, core beliefs and attitudes influence African Americans thoughts of marriage? 4) How do African Americans perceive happiness or joy as it relates to long-term marriages? 5) How do challenges in a marriage of 25 years and longer help strengthen or weaken the relationship? (p. 11).

### **Results**

Ten overarching themes and seven sub-themes emerged from the dissertation. Those themes and subthemes are:

Themes and sub-themes (Maddox, 2013):

- “Commitment” (p. 60).

- “Lifelong Relationships” (p. 60).
- “Marital Satisfaction” (p. 60).
- “Commitment to Marital Relationship” (p. 60).
- “Vows to God” (p. 60).
- “Family of Origin” (sub-themes: “Lifelong Marital Relationships”, “Spiritual Beliefs”, “Family Rituals”) (p. 60).
- “Spiritual Belief with God” (p. 60).
- “Managing Normative and Non-Normative Life Events” (sub-themes: “Love & Commitment To Each Other”, “Tolerance and Respect”, “Reflective Opportunities” (p. 60).
- “Legacy” (sub-theme: “Non-Negotiable of Marriage”) (p. 60).
- “Family Utilized Resources” (p. 60).

Table 3

*Demographics for Maddox (2013) Dissertation*

*	Men	Women	Additional Information
Participants	10 African Americans	10 African Americans	
Marriages			19 - 1 <sup>st</sup> marriage
			1 - 2 <sup>nd</sup> marriage or higher order marriage
Number of years married			25 - 30 = 1 31- 45 = 6

			46 - 50 = 0
			51 - 55 = 2
			56 - 60 = 0
			61 - 65 = 1
Ethnicity			20 African Americans
Age			50 - 55 = 4
			56 - 60 = 4
			61 - 65 = 3
			66 - 70 = 4
			71 - 75 = 1
			76 - 80 = 2
			81 - 85 = 1
			86 - 90 = 1
Age at Marriage	20 or younger = 0	20 or younger = 3	
	21 - 25 = 9	21 - 25 = 7	
	26 - 30 = 1	26 - 30 = 0	
Identified with a religion			20
Religion			African Methodist Episcopal – 5
			Baptist – 5
			Christian – 7
			Methodist – 3

Religious Involvement	Active but limited = 0
	Not Active = 0
	Regular = 8
	Very Involved = 12
Number of children by couples which include biological children, stepchildren, adopted children, and deceased children	Four or more = 2
	Three = 5
	Two = 1
	One = 1
	No Children = 1

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### **Scholarly Research Article 2**

This qualitative article was conducted by Marks et al. (2008). This article is about strong, enduring, happy African American couples and how they made their marriages work even when they experienced conflicts and the death of love ones. The sample was derived from referrals of church leaders, civic leaders, or church leaders and civic leaders in communities that are Black.

Marks et al. (2008) examined “some of the strengths of happy, enduring African American marriages” (p. 172). The “central research question was: How do some African American couples build strong, happy, enduring marriages in the face of challenges and barriers?” (p. 174).

#### **Results**

Core themes related to marriage broadly were (Marks et al., 2008):

- “Challenges in African American Marriages” (p. 176).

- “Overcoming External Challenges to Marriage” (p. 177).
- “Resolving Intramarital Conflict” (p. 178).
- “Unity and the Importance of Being “Equally Yoked” (p. 180).

Table 4

*Demographics for Marks et al. (2008) Article*

*	Men	Women	Additional Information
Couples	30	30	30 married African American couples  7 in a remarriage
Location			Rural = 4  Suburban = 2  Resided in inner – city neighborhoods (Boston, Cleveland, New Orleans, Portland, Milwaukee) = 24
Education			Range from GED – advanced graduate degrees  In the average couple both spouses having some education  Men usually had less education than women

Income	Each spouse in all the couples were dual-earners for the majority of the marriage
	Average combined income \$58,000
Age	Average age - 55      Average age - 53
Length of marriage	At the time of study, few cases retirement and 1 case severe injury Ranged from 42 years old – 75 years old
Children	Average for the couples was about 26 years Couples had an average of slightly less than 3 children
Religion	Age of children ranged from 7 – 49 3 couples reported no religion  27 couples reported both spouses are religious

### Scholarly Research Article 3

This mixed methods article was conducted by Phillips et al. (2012). This article is about how African American marriages last despite obstacles. The measures for this study included a questionnaire for the couple to complete together, a questionnaire for the husband to complete individually, and a questionnaire for the wife to complete individually.

This study “aims to supplement the problem-oriented focus that historically has guided research on marriage among African Americans by focusing on couples whose marriages have stood the test of time” (Phillips et al., 2012, p. 941). Phillips et al. (2012) also “examined several areas of concern relating to enduring (and happy) African American marriages, including but not limited to, (a) factors that have strengthened marriage, (b) challenges that have posed threats to marriage, and (c) key areas of disagreement within marriage” (p. 937). The couples that were recruited had been married a minimum of 15 years.

## **Results**

Joint open-ended Question 1: “What do the two of you believe is the top reason your marriage has lasted so long?” (Phillips et al., 2012, p. 943).

- 51% God/Jesus
- 31% love
- 23% good communication
- 15% trust and honesty
- 13% shared religious practices and beliefs
- 13% having remained friends and still dating
- 11% commitment
- 10% respect

Joint open-ended Question 2: “What would the two of you describe as the biggest challenge or obstacle that you’ve had to overcome in your marriage?” (Phillips et al., 2012, p. 944).

- 25% issues with trust/infidelity
- 24% communication problems
- 11% issues involving the children
- 10% finances
- 7% illness or death of a child

Joint open-ended Question 3: “Looking back over the years that you’ve been married, what would the two of you say is the one thing you’ve disagreed about the most?”

(Phillips et al., 2012, p. 944).

- 24% Money
- 20% decision making/communication
- 15% children

“Individual Quantitative Questionnaires” (Phillips et al., 2012, p. 945):

- 99% of husbands thought they were happier or about as happy as most other married couples.
- 97% of wives thought they were happier or about as happy as most other married couples.
- Efforts to spend considerable time together were reported by most of the couples.
- 91% of husbands reported attending services that were religious one or more than once in a week.
- 99% of wives reported attending services that were religious one or more than once in a week.
- 88% of husbands prayed one or more than one time each day.

- 97% of wives prayed one or more than one time each day.
- Faith was reported as being a factor that was important by 93% of husbands for the longevity of the marriage.
- Faith was reported as being a factor that was important by 94% of wives for the longevity of the marriage.
- Communication and money were generally seen as the topics that the couple disagreed about the most by both husbands and wives.
- Husbands thought the couple disagreed about money the most.
- Wives thought the couple disagreed likely most about communication.

Table 5

*Demographics for Phillips et al. (2012) Article*

*	Men	Women	Additional Information
Couples			71 African American couples (142 individuals)
			Couples that had been married 15 or more years were recruited
Years married			Ranged from 15 - 60
			Mean length = 32 years
In 1 <sup>st</sup> marriage	64	58	

In remarriages	7	13
Age	Mean age = 56.37	Mean age = 56.45
Children		Ranged from 0 – 8 Mean number of children per couple = 3.17
Religious affiliation and involvement		54 % = Baptist 36% = Pentecostal (Church of God in Christ and Church of Christ Holiness) 10% = Methodist
Location		In all cases husbands and wives attended the same church Rural areas of Mississippi Historically Black churches clergy were contacted for possible participant referrals in their congregations

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### Themes

*Theme 1: Religion.* This theme was developed by participants' statements illustrating how their religion played a part in how they viewed marriage and how they thought that their faith played a part in their marriages lasting. Some examples of the participants' responses are below:

“What do the two of you believe is the top reason your marriage has lasted so long?” God/Jesus (51%) (Phillips et al., 2012, p. 943).

“What do the two of you believe is the top reason your marriage has lasted so long? (Phillips et al., 2012, p. 943). “Shared religious practices and beliefs” (13%) (Phillips et al., 2012, p. 944).

“...study participants were highly religiously active with 91% of husbands and 99% of wives reporting attending religious services one or more times per week and 88% of husbands and 97% of wives reporting praying one or more times per day” (Phillips et al., 2012, p. 945).

“Most participants (93% of husbands and 94% of wives) felt that their faith was a very important factor in the longevity of their marriages” (Phillips et al., 2012, p. 945).

“Identified as a resource in the marriage by 58 of the 60 people was faith” (Marks et al., 2008).

“The couples who participated in this study report being happily married, attending church frequently, praying often, and believing that their faith plays a large role in the longevity of their marriages” (Phillips et al., 2012, p. 946).

“Although our data are not representative, there are two noteworthy points. First for many of the couples who were religious, their faith involved not only congregational involvement but also frequent personal and relational references to God” (Marks et al., 2008, p. 184).

One couple stated:

Earl: ... even though we are married and we're supposed to be one...

Tiffany: We're just different! [Mutual laughter.]

Earl: We're individuals. We battle, you know, and a lot of times she don't like the differences in me, and a lot times I don't like the differences in her. But, ... we both believe that marriage is a sacred vow, it's a vow we took before the Lord that we're gonna honor.... We said the same vows, “For better, for worse, in sickness and health, for rich, for poor.” (Marks et al., 2008, p. 178).

One participant stated:

“I think we learned that us depending on our spirituality really helped during those trying times. Friends really helped us...” (Maddox, 2013, p. 77).

A wife explained:

“We’ve been married 25 years, [but] I know for sure that if we didn’t follow the rules of [our faith we wouldn’t have stayed married]. [O]ur personalities, we’re like night and day” (Marks et al., 2008, p. 178).

One remarried wife mentioned:

I’ve been married before, and my first husband was not saved, and he wasn’t interested [in my church]. [It] goes back to what the Lord said about being equally yoked....I was at the church, but ... as a nonbeliever [my ex-husband] thought I was giving too much time. Because of that, we weren’t serving together, [and] we weren’t going together ... we would always feel some type of rift.... [In my second marriage], to be able to go to church with my husband on Sunday morning, he and I sayin’, “We are doin’ it together.”...To me, [that] strengthens the family.... It’s really beneficial for me to be worshiping in the same church [with my husband]. The benefits are ... very, very great, because [by doing it together] you are investing in the lives of your children [and in your marriage] (Marks et al., 2008, p. 181).

One husband communicated:

My faith has shown me how to be a better husband to my wife. It’s shown me how to be a better father to my kids....My faith walk taught me that she is more than just my companion, she’s not only my right hand, but we walk through this life together. The Lord showed me how I should cherish her, my lady, because he’s given me the opportunity to walk this faith walk with [her].... What greater thing is there than to go through life with someone who believes the same thing as you do?... I tell my wife all the time, she is the diamond of my eye....And my [daughters]....I want to show that I love my kids. No matter what....So that when [I’m] an old man... they’ll always know, “My Daddy loved me.” And then they can pass that on to their kids and to their husband[s] (Marks et al., 2008, p. 181).

Another wife mentioned:

[M]e and my husband, ...we pray,...we read Scriptures, and we fast, and we do a lot of that. [For us], fasting means ... we give up two meals, we don’t eat for 24 hours. You fast (for a reason), and during [high] pressure time[s]...we [have] needed a lot of fasting and prayer, and [we] got answers to prayer [regarding] what direction that we need to go. We [are] a team, we do team-work together ... that’s how we get through those really tough times (Marks et al., 2008, p.181).

One wife stated:

[Now] [that our spiritual life is a shared one], we talk about everything. Before, we couldn't because he was living a life that I didn't agree with. That was a conflict between us. He would have to make me mad enough for me to let him go out with his "boys"....There was always a conflict between us. He had his life and I had mine... We were married, but not together. He was still [livin'] "single." Once [he] got into...our religion, [he] understood that God meant for man to [truly invest in marriage] ... and [now] it influences everything we do (Marks et al., 2008, p.181).

Other participants responded:

"God wants us to stay together once we're married" (Maddox, 2013, p. 62).

"I wanted to be a Christian family. Not just going through the motion but doing it; living it" (Maddox, 2013, p. 70).

*Theme 2: Weakness diminished by strengths.* Theme two was developed by spouses recognizing strengths that their partner brought to the marriage. The strengths from each spouse brought a sense of calmness to the marriage. Examples to illustrate this theme are as follows:

"It seems fitting that in these strong, happy, enduring marriages, the greatest interpersonal resource was, therefore, "each other" (Marks et al., 2008, p. 183).

"Indeed, our participants reported that life's challenges were often met by relying heavily on a committed spouse" (Marks et al., 2008, p. 177).

"Because of us putting God first, I believe my husband has been my greatest source of strength. I can lean on him for everything" (Maddox, 2013, p. 71).

"She has been the greatest source....Of course with the understanding that God had put us there" (Maddox, 2003, p. 71).

"My wife. Of course God had to be in her..." (Maddox, 2003, p. 71).

One husband expressed:

I think that's one of the strengths of our marriage right now. We really don't have to go outside of the house [for strength and support]. I mean, you always talk to

different people. I have [other] friends. But anything that's [really] bothering me, anything I'm anxious to discuss, the first person I go to is Shantell, [my wife] (Marks et al., 2008, p.177).

One wife expressed:

I remember getting ready to go into [my Daddy's] funeral, and I remember a voice telling me that my husband was my strength. I remember that because I started walking down the aisle with the family as were going in, and I kind of lost it, and then, all of a sudden, there Steven [my husband] was right next to me, holding me, and I felt a strength. That reminded me of a scripture that I had read the day before, where God had clearly told me that my husband was my strength at that time.... That's been true throughout [our marriage]. We experienced my Mother's death and my two brothers passed away, and the same thing, [Steven was] my strength. Then my daughter Shelly, when she passed away, again, it was rough...[but] together, we're strong... [Steven] reminds me that God is ultimately my strength, but Steven is [also] here, to be my strength beside me (Marks et al., 2008, p. 177).

A wife explained:

[W]e both accepted the change. I think that because we were both willing to accept that things were changing...it made it much easier for everybody....[O]ur priority was, we had kids. [He cooked and cleaned and ran the house while I went to work].... We wanted to make sure that we kept the family together, strongly together. So, we made the changes that were necessary to survive (Marks et al., 2008, pp. 177-178).

Another participant stated:

Each time I've gone through, I've discovered it's not about us. We are not individual when it comes to family stuff. We are a unit. Being willing to make adjustments...being willing to be what the other person needs (Maddox, 2013, p. 77).

*Theme 3: Core values.* Core values emerged as a theme as participants

communicated what was important to them in the relationship. Some examples of the participants' responses are below:

"Trust and honesty 15%" (p. 943) of the couples listed as the 4<sup>th</sup> reason for their marriage's longevity (Phillips et al., 2012).

“Good communication (23%)” (p. 943) was listed by the couples as the 3<sup>rd</sup> reason for their marriage’s longevity (Phillips et al., 2012).

“... the vast majority of these couples reportedly make the effort to spend significant time together” (Phillips et al., 2012, p. 945).

“Respect (10%)” (p. 944) of the couples listed as the 8<sup>th</sup> reason for their marriage’s longevity (Phillips et al., 2012).

“Morals/values (7%)” (p. 944) of the couples listed as the 10<sup>th</sup> reason for their marriage’s longevity (Phillips et al., 2012).

“Of the 30 couples, 27 were actively “religious,” and in the remaining 3 couples, neither spouse was religious” (Marks et al., 2008, p. 184).

“Second, every couple in our study was “on the same page” when it came to religious involvement—they participated together or they stayed home together” (Marks et al., 2008, p. 184).

One participant said:

“Because we’re friends. You treat your friends with respect. We made a verbal contract to always respect each other. We’re kind to each other” (Maddox, 2013, p. 64).

*Theme 4: Commitment.* Commitment emerged as a theme as the participants discussed how they made up their mind to remain in the relationship despite obstacles that they may face. Indeed, the majority of researchers suggest that commitment is a critical component in marital relationships that are stable (Goodman, Dollahite, Marks, & Layton, 2013). Examples of this theme are shown below:

“What do the two of you believe is the top reason your marriage has lasted so long? (Phillips et al., 2012, p. 943). “Commitment (11%)” (Phillips et al., 2012, p. 944).

One husband commented:

We both feel that a marriage is a bonding thing. As [God] says, “Whatever I join together let no man put asunder.” I believe that my faith made me love my wife a lot more. We are very different. If it weren’t for faith, I probably would have run

a long time ago. “You don’t want to do what I want to do. We just don’t see eye to eye. I’m gone”. But when you believe in God... yes, the boat still gets to rockin’ but [God] says, “In me you can weather the storm (Marks et al., 2008, p. 179).

“...Till death do us part” (Maddox, 2013, p. 62).

“We were committed to each other. We took our vows seriously before God” (Maddox, 2013, p. 64).

“Our commitment to on[e] another; Faithfulness to Christ and Obedience to our marriage vows” (Maddox, 2013, p. 65).

Some participants stated:

“One person, the entire length. Till death” (Maddox, 2013, p. 62).

“I was committed early. There was an expectation that she was made for me. I had this unusual feeling, it was a force beyond me, and it was bigger than me. I knew I was supposed to be with her” (Maddox, 2013, p. 61).

“I knew I was committed. It was something going into it, of which I had no intentions of backing out. I knew I was going to be in for the long-haul. If it dissolved, it was because of my partner, not me” (Maddox, 2013, p. 62).

The thing learned the most, when you love someone, you have to accept everything about that person. It’s about every flaw, focus on who they are and why you love them. I accept the flaw, and this person is wonderful. There’s more good here than bad. You start seeing all the good that person has to offer. Spent a lot of time early on wanting to change, not now. I focus on the love we have and who she is. The flaws are a part of the package (Maddox, 2013, p. 77).

“I learned that God is able to do anything but fail with whatever you challenge is. There is none too big” (Maddox, 2003, p. 99).

Earl explained:

[In strong marriages], the troubles will help them grow closer. We had a few crises [but] we just pulled together and we got through it, and it drew us closer together as a unit. As opposed to [a husband and wife] just fighting [with] each other and snapping at each other and blaming each other, “It’s your fault—“[No,] It’s your fault! ...” (Marks et al., 2008, p. 178).

One wife said:

[There] is always some conflict in family.... [The strong family is the] family that know[s] how to deal with that ... and [is able to emerge from the conflict] still loving and caring for each other. That's the difference ... (Marks et al., 2008, p.178).

Another wife said:

A good husband to me is somebody who's always there for you no matter what, because I can get on his nerves, and I know I do, but he's still there. He's still willing to be with me. We're able to talk out all our problems.... [Some] people might say, "I don't care if [my husband] is mad or not." Or "I don't care if I spend all the money up." But in my mind I'm thinking. ... I've got to get myself together and give him the honor of what this relationship means. ... [W]e've been ... married [twenty-one] years, and it's not all been great, but when they see [me], they want to know where [my husband] is (Marks et al., 2008, p.179).

A husband stated:

You know, like I told you, I said, "Til death do us part." I'm going to be here. I want you to be here for me too. That's what my Mother told me. [She] said before we got married, "You[']ve got to listen to the words." That's what my Mama said, "If you [are] truly, really, ready to get married ... you got listen to the words." That's what I did, I listened. That's what I want it to be, [']til death do us part. That's where I want the relationship to be. I'm always going to have [your] back and I want you to have mine. (Marks et al., 2008, p. 182).

Other participants responded:

"One person, the entire length. Till death" (Maddox, 2012, p. 62).

"It goes back to commitment. You take your marriage vows and it says through the good and bad times. You have to realize that you're in. The next relationship would be the same if you left this one" (Maddox, 2012, p. 64).

"It was a commitment to on[e] another. We said early on, divorce was never to be mentioned. Don't know where I picked it up... Heard reference of commitment at some marriage retreat" (Maddox, 2013, p. 64).

*Theme 5: Satisfaction.* Theme five emerged from the results that specifically communicated about marital satisfaction or behaviors that are shown in marriages where the spouses exhibit satisfaction. The following are examples of this theme:

It just flowed. He was a very nice person. When we first started dating, people were like, “[“] your boyfriend is good looking.” I was looking at how nice he was. He’s a true friend, he makes me laugh. Even when it’s bad, we can talk about it. He’s just a very nice person and I respect that (Maddox, 2013, p. 73).

“What do the two of you believe is the top reason your marriage has lasted so long?” (Phillips et al., 2012, p. 943). “Have remained friends and still dating (13%)” (Phillips et al., 2012, p. 944).

“Controlling for covariates, we found that greater levels of marital satisfaction were associated with lower levels of psychological distress” (Lincoln & Chae, 2010, pp. 1092, 1094).

“Our study emphasizes the protective effect of marital satisfaction on psychological distress, as well as its potential to buffer the negative effects of unfair treatment and financial strain on psychological distress” (Lincoln & Chae, 2010, p. 1096).

“Marital satisfaction was negatively associated with psychological distress, indicating that marital quality is an important predictor of mental health status among married African Americans” (Lincoln & Chae, 2010, p. 1097).

“Importantly, our findings also suggest that marital satisfaction may buffer the negative effects of unfair treatment and financial strain on psychological distress” (Lincoln & Chae, 2010, p. 1098).

“Our sample, men and women, was typically described in interviewers’ field notes in words like “positive,” “upbeat,” “quick to laugh,” “great smile,” “joyous,” and so forth (Marks et al., 2008, 182).

“Descriptive analysis revealed that most participants were satisfied with their marriages (95.0%), with a majority of participants reporting being “very satisfied” with their marriages (69.1%)” (Lincoln & Chae, 2010, p. 1089).

“Predicted values indicated that marital satisfaction buffered the negative effect of unfair treatment” (Lincoln & Chae, 2010, p. 1094).

“...work status, with those who were out of the labor force reporting higher levels of marital satisfaction compared with those who were working” (Lincoln & Chae, 2010, p. 1090).

Other participants communicated:

“Our best vacation was going to Hawaii. We’ve traveled a lot during our marriage. Most places he plans the trips for us. He loves to buy flowers, gifts. He likes surprising me with gifts” (Maddox, 2013, p. 73).

“When we travel together...I would probably say we have had some really good times. Because you’re always together. We both love sports. I was a daddy’s girl growing up so I know a lot about sports and can enjoy them with my husband” (Maddox, 2013, pp. 73-74).

Table 6 represents the identified themes in this content analysis study and what articles and dissertation included the theme.

Table 6

*Themes/Articles/Dissertation*

*	Lincoln, K. D., & Chae, D. H. (2010). Stress, marital satisfaction, and psychological distress among African Americans	Maddox, M. (2013). Perceptions of committed marriages in African American heterosexual couples married 25 years and longer	Marks, L. D., Hopkins, K., Chaney, C., Monroe, P. A., Nesteruk, O., & Sasser, D. D. (2008). “Together, we are strong”: A qualitative study of happy, enduring African American marriages	Phillips, T. M., Wilmoth, J. D., & Marks, L. D. (2012). Challenges and conflicts... strengths and supports: A study of enduring African American marriages
<i>Religion</i>		✓	✓	✓

<i>Weakness Diminished by Strengths</i>	✓	✓	
<i>Core Values</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>Commitment</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>Satisfaction</i>	✓	✓	✓

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*Note.* Check mark indicates theme included in the article or dissertation.

### **Summary**

Chapter IV reported the three articles and one dissertation that were selected for this content analysis study. This chapter also provided an understanding of some of the themes that have emerged in the literature covering the years 2008-2018 in selected scholarly journals, and a TWU dissertation on Marital Quality in African American Marital Unions. The themes that emerged after analyzing the articles and dissertation were shared with explanations given for the selection of the theme names. The expression of religion or characteristics that may arguable be displayed in a religious person was shown across the religion, weakness diminished by strengths, core values, and commitment themes. When the primary researcher analyzed themes, it seemed on the surface that core values and satisfaction might have been closely related. However, after further introspection it appeared that core values add to the satisfaction level in the marital union.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Chapter V reviews the purpose, research questions, selection of articles and dissertation, and research design for this study. The themes are shown with illustrations given to further elaborate on each theme. Chapter II and Chapter IV are compared and contrasted. Conclusions, limitations, implications, and recommendations for future research are discussed.

#### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to conduct a content analysis of the scholarly literature on marital quality in African American marital unions in 20 scholarly journals and TWU dissertations published from 2008-2018. The two research questions addressed in this content analysis study were: Research Question 1: How do African American couples develop marital quality in their marital unions? Research Question 2: What are common themes that are emerging in the literature on marital quality in African American marital unions?

The total number of articles found was 1,661. However, there were only three selected scholarly journal articles that addressed both of the research questions and were in selected scholarly journals that met the search strategy for this content analysis. The other (1,656) articles were not selected because the author(s) researched topics such as premarital cohabitation effecting the trajectory of marital quality, midlife singles'

willingness to date partners with diverse qualities, how satisfaction and employment effect males' and females' decision to leave a marriage, etc. The total number of dissertations found was 17. One dissertation met the criteria set forth in this content analysis study. The other (16) dissertations were not selected because they were about perspectives from African American grandmothers, parenting after divorce, intimate partner violence, etc.

Content analysis is thought of best as a method, analytic strategy, and an overall approach (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Content analysis involves a systematic examination of communication forms to document patterns objectively. It is an unobtrusive method of research. In unobtrusive research the researcher does not affect the social research while studying it because the raw material has already taken place (ex. article has been written, book has been written, speech has been spoken, etc.; Babbie, 2004). Any form of communication can be used as the raw material for a content analysis (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Babbie (2004) suggested that content analysis requires a "a thoughtful handling of the "what" that is being communicated (p. 314).

### **Themes**

Five themes emerged after analyzing the content found in the three scholarly research articles and one dissertation. The five themes that emerged are (1) religion, (2) weakness diminished by strengths, (3) core values, (4) commitment, and (5) satisfaction.

*Theme 1: Religion.* This theme illustrates the participants' speaking about how their faith has played a part in their marriage. Examples of this theme are shown as follows:

“What do the two of you believe is the top reason your marriage has lasted so long?” God/Jesus (51%) (Phillips et al., 2012, p. 943).

“God wants us to stay together once we’re married” (Maddox, 2013, p. 62).

One couple stated:

Earl: ... even though we are married and we’re supposed to be one...

Tiffany: We’re just different! [Mutual laughter.]

Earl: We’re individuals. We battle, you know, and a lot of times she don’t like the differences in me, and a lot times I don’t like the differences in her. But, ... we both believe that marriage is a sacred vow, it’s a vow we took before the Lord that we’re gonna honor.... We said the same vows, “For better, for worse, in sickness and health, for rich, for poor.” (Marks et al., 2008, p.178).

*Theme 2: Weakness diminished by strengths.* This theme illustrates the two spouses helping one another. The help may come when a family member has died, through communication in times of uncertainty, and/or working together to help the marital union. Examples of this theme are as follows:

“It seems fitting that in these strong, happy, enduring marriages, the greatest interpersonal resource was, therefore, “each other” (Marks et al., 2008, p. 183).

One participant stated:

“Each time I’ve gone through, I’ve discovered it’s not about us. We are not individual when it comes to family stuff. We are a unit. Being willing to make

adjustments...being willing to be what the other person needs” (Maddox, 2013, p. 77).

*Theme 3: Core values.* This theme illustrates participants speaking about the qualities that played a part in their marriages lasting. Examples of this theme are as follows:

“Good communication (23%)” (p. 943) was listed by the couples as the third reason for their marriage’s longevity (Phillips et al., 2012).

“Second, every couple in our study was “on the same page” when it came to religious involvement—they participated together or they stayed home together” (Marks et al., 2008, p. 184).

One participant said:

“Because we’re friends. You treat your friends with respect. We made a verbal contract to always respect each other. We’re kind to each other” (Maddox, 2013, p. 64).

*Theme 4: Commitment.* This theme illustrates couples making the decision to stay together in good and bad times. The couples made the decision that divorce was not an option and that working through hard times can bring them closer together as a unit.

Examples of this theme are as follows:

What do the two of you believe is the top reason your marriage has lasted so long? (Phillips et al., 2012, p. 943). “Commitment (11%)” (Phillips et al., 2012, p. 944).

One husband commented:

“We both feel that a marriage is a bonding thing. As [God] says, “Whatever I join together let no man put asunder.” I believe that my faith made me love my wife a lot more. We are very different. If it weren’t for faith, I probably would have run a long time ago. “You don’t want to do what I want to do. We just don’t see eye to eye. I’m gone”. But when you believe in God... yes, the boat still gets to rockin’ but [God] says, “In me you can weather the storm” (Marks et al., 2008, p. 179).

“I was committed early. There was an expectation that she was made for me. I had this unusual feeling, it was a force beyond me, and it was bigger than me. I knew I was supposed to be with her” (Maddox, 2013, p. 61).

*Theme 5: Satisfaction.* This theme illustrates participants’ speaking about marital satisfaction or displaying behaviors to show satisfaction. Examples of this theme are as follows:

“What do the two of you believe is the top reason your marriage has lasted so long?” (Phillips et al., 2012, p. 943). “Have remained friends and still dating (13%)” (Phillips et al., 2012, p. 944).

“It just flowed. He was a very nice person. When we first started dating, people were like, [“] your boyfriend is good looking.” I was looking at how nice he was. He’s a true friend, he makes me laugh. Even when it’s bad, we can talk about it. He’s just a very nice person and I respect that” (Maddox, 2013, p. 73).

“Our sample, men and women, was typically described in interviewers’ field notes in words like “positive,” “upbeat,” “quick to laugh,” “great smile,” “joyous,” and so forth (Marks et al., 2008, 182).

“Marital satisfaction was negatively associated with psychological distress, indicating that marital quality is an important predictor of mental health status among married African Americans” (Lincoln & Chae, 2010, p. 1097).

## **Chapter II and Chapter IV Compare/Contrast**

Empirical literature has established that religion in many families in America matters (Marks et al., 2012). This view is consistent with the results from this content analysis study. In that it seems as though religion is important to many of the African Americans couples in this study. One theme found in this study was *Religion* and three of the other themes (weakness diminished by strengths, cores values, and commitment) had a flavor of religion.

Research has indicated that in the United States, the Black marriage is in crisis (Malone-Colon, 2007). The Family Strength approach is one model that can be used to help families. The six general qualities in this model include: appreciation and affection, spending time together, commitment, spiritual well-being/high degree of spiritual orientation, positive communication/good communication patterns, and ability to manage crisis and stress/ability to deal with crises in a positive manner (DeFrain, 1999; Stinnett et al., 1979).

*Appreciation and affection* is when the members in the family care deeply and express a lot of appreciation for one another. This is made known to the members often.

However, in some cultures openly expressing appreciation and affection is not common (DeFrain, 1999; Stinnett et al., 1979).

*Spending time together* is doing things together that is enjoyed by everyone.

Strong families experience quality time in large quantities. The families structure their lives to spend time together in every area of their lives (eating meals together, recreation) (DeFrain, 1999; Stinnett et al., 1979).

*Commitment* is when it is clear to others that the members of the family are important (DeFrain, 1999). The families were committed deeply to the welfare and happiness of its members (Stinnett et al., 1979). It is key to mention that a marriage can become a strong unit without a major crisis occurring (DeFrain, 1999).

*Spiritual well-being* is about connection. Connection with what is sacred and a connection to one another (DeFrain, 1999). These families often went to church together and together did religious activities (Stinnett et al., 1979).

*Positive communication* is when family members speak to one another honestly and directly about conflicts and differences without condemning or blaming one another (DeFrain, 1999). These families talk with one another (Stinnett et al., 1979). These families listen to one another (Stinnett et al., 1979). Strong families ask questions and do not try to mind-read other family members thoughts (DeFrain, 1999). When these families disagree, they talk about the disagreement, and try to find a solution that is best for everyone (Stinnett et al., 1979). Troubled families either avoid verbal conflict and deny that problems exist, or are overly hostile and critical when communicating with one another (DeFrain, 1999).

*Ability to handle crisis and stress* is not a quality that strong families are immune to, but they tend to be less prone to crisis than the likelihood that troubled families have. They handle problems and crisis in a positive manner (Stinnett et al., 1979). Since some stressors in life occur inevitably, the family can look for opportunities for growth in the process (DeFrain, 1999).

As educators, therapists, and researchers look for strengths of the family, identify them, those strengths can be used as a foundation for positive change in society and the family (DeFrain, 1999). Hence, strong families can serve as role models for others who want to create relationships that are healthy with ones that they love (DeFrain, 1999). In the African American community strong marriages exist (Chaney, Shirisia, & Skogrand, 2016). Indeed, the participants in the selected articles and dissertation in this content analysis study spoke about how their marriages have lasted and processes that they have used to weather storms in their marriages.

Marriage is important (Cutrona et al., 2003), and is valued (Pinderhughes, 2002) in the African American community. Marriage relationships come in many forms. Some of the relationship forms include: passive-congenial, vital, devitalized, conflict-habituated, and total. A cyclical relationship is also a form that has been observed often (Stinnett & Walters, 1977).

A passive-congenial relationship is where the partners seem to be void and indifferent (Stinnett & Walters, 1977). Spouses personal involvement has been very little since the beginning of the relationship. The couple engage in few activities with one another and do not seem to have a deep care for one another (Stinnett & Walters, 1977).

A vital relationship is where the spouses have experience togetherness and sharing that is genuine and an intense psychological connection (Stinnett & Walters, 1977). The spouses enjoy spending time together so much that an activity is more enjoyable when shared with the spouse. The companionship in this type of relationship is seen as vital to the spouses. Conflicts are settled quickly in this type of relationship (Stinnett & Walters, 1977).

A devitalized relationship seems to be common (Stinnett & Walters, 1977). That is to say, as the relationship has continued the liveliness and satisfaction has declined. During the early years of the relationship, there was more closeness, satisfaction, and meaningfulness. As the years progressed the time that the couple spends together seems to be more out of duty (going to kid's activities, entertaining, etc.). In this type of relationship there is minimal overt conflict. The relationship has become void, lifeless, and indifferent (Stinnett & Walters, 1977).

In a conflict-habituated relationship conflict and tension dominate the relationship (Stinnett & Walters, 1977). The spouse has the tendency to bring up mistakes that the partner has made in the past. Possibly the most unfortunate form of this type of relationship is when the spouses engage in a pattern of mocking one another, and tearing one another down generally in public and private (Stinnett & Walters, 1977).

The total relationship and the vital relationship are similar (Stinnett & Walters, 1977). The total relationship involves additional companionship and sharing. The different areas in the relationship are not in competition with one another, but enhance one another (Stinnett & Walters, 1977).

In a cyclical relationship the spouses experience periods of dissatisfaction, failure to cope, and conflict (Stinnett & Walters, 1977). The relationship then has a period of calmness, and happiness. To a degree, all marital relationships are cyclical (Stinnett & Walters, 1977).

In this content analysis study, the couples seem to be involved in the vital relationship, total relationship, and cyclical relationship forms. Participants' comments representing the vital relationship and total relationship form are as follows:

Our best vacation was going to Hawaii. We've traveled a lot during our marriage. Most places he plans the trips for us. He loves to buy flowers, gifts. He likes surprising me with gifts (Maddox, 2013, p. 73).

One wife expressed:

I remember getting ready to go into [my Daddy's] funeral, and I remember a voice telling me that my husband was my strength. I remember that because I started walking down the aisle with the family as were going in, and I kind of lost it, and then, all of a sudden, there Steven [my husband] was right next to me, holding me, and I felt a strength. That reminded me of a scripture that I had read the day before, where God had clearly told me that my husband was my strength at that time.... That's been true throughout [our marriage]. We experienced my Mother's death and my two brothers passed away, and the same thing, [Steven was] my strength. Then my daughter Shelly, when she passed away, again, it was rough...[but] together, we're strong... [Steven] reminds me that God is ultimately

my strength, but Steven is [also] here, to be my strength beside me (Marks et al., 2008, p. 177).

The cyclical relationship form is represented in one wife's comment as follows:

A good husband to me is somebody who's always there for you no matter what, because I can get on his nerves, and I know I do, but he's still there. He's still willing to be with me. We're able to talk out all our problems.... [Some] people might say, "I don't care if [my husband] is mad or not." Or "I don't care if I spend all the money up." But in my mind I'm thinking. ... I've got to get myself together and give him the honor of what this relationship means. ... [W]e've been ... married [twenty-one] years, and it's not all been great, but when they see [me], they want to know where [my husband] is (Marks et al., 2008, p.179).

### **Conclusion**

Authors have suggested that understanding marital happiness by gender and race trends have a possible value at the individual and societal levels (Corra, Carter, Carter, & Knox, 2009). Indeed, present happiness by the spouses in the marriage can have an impact on marital quality and marital strength in the future (Corra et al., 2009). Marital quality and marital stability are not identical (Bryant, Wickrama, Bolland, Bryant, Curona, & Stanik, 2010), therefore, it is beneficial for those who work with African American families to have a keener understanding of marital quality in African American marital unions.

### **Limitations**

One limitation for this content analysis study is that the main focus of this content analysis was on African Americans in the United States. Another limitation was that this study only covered the years of 2008-2018. Yet another limitation is that the study only selected articles from specific journals and TWU dissertations. Despite these mentioned limitations, this content analysis study contributes to the body of knowledge on marital quality, enhances the understanding of what couples reported has helped them form marital quality in their marital unions, and shares some themes that have emerged in the literature on marital quality in African American marital unions between 2008-2018.

### **Implications**

Day and Acock (2013) have suggested that a person does not only have to get relational virtues (forgiveness, sacrifice, and commitment) in the church, but that those couples that do increase relational virtues are one step ahead for increasing marital quality, marital stability, and lessening conflict in their relationships. As mentioned by Perry (2016), generally Americans that are married that have a spouse that is perceived to have increased religiosity, state receiving expressive forms of love more frequently and marital satisfaction that is higher.

It seems intuitive that family care practitioners, if they feel comfortable, would encourage couples to either (a) mine their faith traditions and communities for whatever aspects of religious life contribute to generosity, faithfulness, forgiveness, kindness, and other qualities that might strengthen the relationship,

or (b) try to replicate those values, principles, practices, and community support for nonreligious couples to strengthen their unions as well (Perry, 2016, p. 339).

This content analysis study provides implications that can be beneficial to those that professionally have an impact on marital unions. Some implications for the government, mass media, clergy, and therapists are as follows:

### **Government**

- The government should fund programs that work to enhance the development of strong African American marital unions.

### **Mass Media**

- “The mass media, with its powerful influence on our social environment, especially for the young, must be encouraged to present positive messages and images of African Americans and their relationships, culture, and lifestyles” (Malone-Colon, 2007, p. 4).

### **Clergy**

- Clergy can work to help couples assess whether their partner holds the same or similar core values.
- Clergy can work to offer activities/workshops that strengthen the marital unions in their congregation.

### **Family Therapist**

- Family therapists can help couples to understand that marriage is a partnership.
- Family therapists can help couples to understand that those that have marital quality sometimes disagree.

- Family therapists can assess whether the couple sees divorce as an option to relieve marital distress.
- Family therapists can reach out to religious leaders to offer marital quality topics workshops.
- Family therapists can assess family-of-origin marital history and thoughts.
- Counselors should be prepared to share research to aid in the dispelling of myths. Counselors should also recognize that the advice given by them may differ from the advice that the spouses are receiving from others (clergy, family members, friends; Coleman & Ganong, 1985).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This content analysis study lays out important information on marital quality in African American marital unions. “As we better understand not only what destroys marriage but also what nourishes it, we will become more informed and more effective educators, researchers, clinicians, clergy, and members of families” (Phillips et al., 2012, p. 948). There is a need for more research on African American marital unions.

Some recommendations for future research include the following:

- Future research may consider conducting a qualitative study that specifically asks African American couples about marital quality in their marital unions.
- Future research may consider sharing results of marital quality in African American marital unions with clergy in African American churches in workbook formats.

- Future research may focus on the religion-to-marital commitment connection to gain a better understanding of this phenomenon.

### **Summary**

Religion seems to be very important in the African American community. Indeed, religion or a religious flavor was shown in the majority of the sample (two articles and one dissertation). This indicates that in this content analysis study religion and marital quality in African American marital unions are heavily linked together. In this content analysis study, satisfaction was the strongest theme, second were religion, core values, and commitment; and third was Weakness Diminished by Strengths. Taking all themes together, it appears as though expressing laughter, smiles, etc. (*Satisfaction*) + using faith virtues (*Religion*) + receiving what is important to you (*Core Values*) + having staying power in the relationship (*Commitment*) + understanding that one person does not equal all the power (*Weakness Diminished by Strengths*) = One recipe for how African American couples develop marital quality in marital unions.

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APPENDIX A  
Coding Manual

## CODING MANUAL

### INSTRUCTIONS

**Author:** Author of article/dissertation

**Journal/Dissertation & Year:** Journal article/dissertation name & Year of article/dissertation

**Title:** Title of article/dissertation

**Kind of Research:** quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods

**Purpose of Study:** author(s) stated purpose of the research/author(s) research questions that guided the study

**Sample:** Demographic information such as age, marital status, ethnicity, education, religion, etc.

**Measures:** how was data collected (questions, interviews, etc.)

**Results/Discussion presented in the article/dissertation:** as presented by the author(s) in the article/dissertation

**Theme One – Theme Five:** Patterns that emerged after analyzing the data from these articles/dissertation. Please list examples under each theme.

**Comment(s):** Any note that you want to make if none put none or N/A. If comment(s) are given please state the article/dissertation used and page number(s) of the comment(s).

CODING MANUAL

TABLE

Author	Journal/Dissertation & Year	Title	Kind of Research	Purpose of Study	Sample	Measures
Results/Discussion presented in the article/dissertation	Theme One		Theme Two	Theme Three	Theme Four	Theme Five

**Comment(s)**

## APPENDIX B

Journals, Coded Articles, and TWU Dissertation Listing

## JOURNALS, CODED ARTICLES, AND TWU DISSERTATION LISTING

### ***TWU Dissertation***

Maddox, M. (2013). *Perceptions of committed marriages in African American heterosexual couples married 25 years and longer* (Doctoral dissertation).

Retrieved from Dissertations & Theses at Texas Woman's University (ProQuest).

### ***Family Relations***

Marks, L. D., Hopkins, K., Chaney, C., Monroe, P. A., Nesteruk, O., & Sasser, D. D.

(2008). "Together, we are strong": A qualitative study of happy, enduring African American marriages. *Family Relations*, 57(2), 172-185.

### ***Journal of Black Studies***

Phillips, T. M., Wilmoth, J. D., & Marks, L. D. (2012). Challenges and conflicts...

strengths and supports: A study of enduring African American marriages. *Journal of Black Studies*, 43(8), 936-952.

### ***Journal of Family Issues***

Lincoln, K. D., & Chae, D. H. (2010). Stress, marital satisfaction, and psychological

distress among African Americans. *Journal of Family Issues*, 31(8), 1081-1105.