

ENDURING MARRIAGES OF THE FIFTIES

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Marriage as a traditional institution is presently being analyzed, questioned, and doubted by some as to the purpose, usefulness and advisability of such a contract. Currently more than one out of three marriages end in divorce. The question that arises in long term marriages becomes, "What determines whether the marriage remains intact or ends in divorce?".

Generally speaking, men and women who married in the 1950's viewed marriage as a lifelong commitment. At that time, the divorce rate was approximately one out of five (Statistical Abstract of the U.S., 1980). Divorce was thought about in terms of affecting other people, but certainly not themselves. The majority of couples came from homes where parents stayed together regardless of circumstances, degree of love, or satisfaction (Pineo, 1961; Todd, 1980). Traditional values such as home, family, church and country were commonly revered (Zube, 1972).

The decade of the 1960's brought forth questions about loyalty to country during the Vietnam War. In addition, the Civil Rights Movement and the Women's Movement for equality contributed to people focusing on themselves as individuals with individual rights rather than just as members of a family or a group. Divorces increased to more than one out of four couples. Pressures on "finding oneself" continued during

the 1970's. Women entered the work force in growing numbers due to economic necessity, and also because of desires to fulfill their potential as human beings, as well as wives and mothers.

At the beginning of the 1980's, divorce no longer has the social stigma of failure or the condemnation from some religious groups that it once had. The divorce rate is up to one out of two marriages (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1982). Yet, in spite of changing values, there are men and women who took their marriage vows during the 1950's who are choosing to remain married.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine intact first marriages which took place during the 1950's to determine reasons for the continuation of the union. Outside factors influencing the individual decisions to remain married will be investigated. Strengths and commonalities in the relationship that the subjects perceive as forces which contribute to the marriage remaining will be identified.

Hypotheses

The null hypotheses of this study are: (1) there is no significant difference between responses of male subjects and female subjects in regard to questions 13 through 74; and (2) there is no significant difference in the responses of subjects with less than high school education, high school diploma, some college education, college diploma, and graduate level education in regard to questions 13 through 74.

Summary

Despite the rising divorce rate and decreasing societal and religious pressures to remain in marriages, many couples that were married in the 1950's have chosen to remain together. It is the purpose of this study to explore and identify strengths and common values in these marriages in addition to outside forces that contribute to the continuation of the marriage relationship.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Most of the literature concerning marriages and families has concentrated on courtship and early marriage years. Only recently has much research been done on older marriages, and that in itself has been contradictory and confusing. Todd (1980), when interviewing 35 couples who had been married 50 years or more to learn the secrets of their marital success, found that many of them were unhappy. Marriage for the sake of marriage was the essential element. The couples had "survived the depression," and intended to stay together regardless of degree of unhappiness. The wives were for the most part financially dependent upon the husbands and felt they had no options but to make the best of what they had in the marriage.

Sporakowski and Hughston (1978) learned from their study of 40 couples married 50 or more years that while they agreed that marriage was a positive experience, the husbands gave a higher satisfaction rating than the wives. Streib and Beck (1980) in their review of the literature in the seventies have noted considerably more interest in the older couples as they face retirement and old age in comparison to research in the sixties. However, gaps still remain between the periods of the children leaving home and retirement.

Satisfaction in the Mid-stage

In 1954 Burgess and Wallin (1954) continued the research they began in 1927 of 1,000 couples. This follow-up study was done when the original couples had been married up to 20 years. The results were:

(1) there was a general drop in marital satisfaction and adjustment, (2) there was a loss of intimacy, (3) personal adjustments were relatively unaffected by the drop of satisfaction, and (4) forms of marital interaction changed as the frequency of sexual activity decreased and the amount of shared activities declined.

Pineo (1961) in an analysis of the 20-year follow-up of the longitudinal study by Burgess and Wallin found a general drop in marital satisfaction and adjustment during the middle period. He found that disenchantment in the later years of marriage may be compensated by other factors outside the marriage relationship and that disenchantment occurred sooner for husbands than for wives.

Glick (1955) did a demographic and economic analysis of marriages in the early 1950's. He investigated families over the whole life cycle and was one of the first to identify the post-parental period of the family life cycle. Bossard and Boll (1955) studied happiness ratings made by siblings of married persons and raised the questions: (1) does marital happiness vary with the ages of married couples, and (2) is there a peak for unhappiness in the life cycle. He found that the 40's and 50's were crucial times for women in terms of emotional anxiety and sexual frustrations. Men had a peak of unhappiness with their marriages

in the 50's with the major reason related to their occupational position. Many of the men who had achieved some prominence felt that their wives had not kept up with them, while those who had not achieved occupational successes felt some resentment from their wives for failure to do so.

Deutcher (1958) found two polarized points of view: (1) post-parental life being generally difficult with the changes of family structure and facing aging problems, and (2) a tendency toward a time of relief from financial and emotional responsibilities. He found that activities shared or enjoyed separately followed no pattern for a smooth transition to post-parental life.

Some studies conclude that contrary to belief, childhood years of marriage were not the most rewarding or satisfying. Blood and Wolfe's (1960) study found that couples without children have higher levels of marital satisfaction, and that many marriages with children improve after the children leave home. However, a large number of wives expressed a definite dissatisfaction during the post-parental period while only 20% of them were fully satisfied with their marriages.

Axelson (1960) found that husbands indicated higher satisfaction after the children left home due to decreased financial worries and increased interpersonal relationships, while wives have significant increases in loneliness. Gurin, Veroff, and Feld (1960) found increasing marital satisfaction during the early stages, leveling off, and an increase during the later stages. They found the low point to be close to the "empty nest" stage before retirement. However, Burr (1970) found

the school-age period to be the most difficult with a rising trend thereafter that lasts until retirement.

Rollins and Feldman (1970) attempted to clarify discrepancies in various studies concerning patterns of satisfaction over the life cycle. They found that marriage has very different meanings for husbands and wives and that they experience the various life cycles with a wide variance of marital satisfaction. Husbands have less variations with a drop just before retirement, while wives are more influenced by the presence or absence of children.

Chilman (1968) recognized the lack of research regarding families or marriages in mid-stage of the life cycle. She found that although marital satisfaction declines during the mid-stage, it is not necessarily synonymous with a decline in satisfaction with family life. It seems that although the presence of children makes for a rockier road, it also brings the variations that enhance the family life. When the children leave home, an adjustment period to a new life stage occurs for both husband and wife with anxieties about facing old age plus the rewards of decreased responsibilities for the children.

Other Factors Relating to Marital Stability

While marital satisfaction continues to be the most widely studied factor in measuring marriages, research is showing a growing interest in other variables that influence whether or not couples remain together during the mid to later years. Hicks and Platt (1970) when reviewing marriages during the decade of the 1960's concluded that factors other

than marital satisfaction need to be addressed, as unhappy marriages do not necessarily equate to unstable marriages.

Ard (1977) in a 1955 study of the sexual relationships and sexual preferences of 161 couples married 20 years or more found that husbands rate significantly higher in both expectation perception and frequency preference. Rose (1955) looked at role satisfaction in the middle stage of marriage. She found that men are generally satisfied with their role as breadwinner in the marriage, while women lack preparation for the change in role in middle years as the children leave home. She also found that a large proportion of satisfied wives work outside the home. She concluded that marriage has different role satisfaction relationships for men and women, with age at marriage and work outside the home critical to women and social participation a direct cause of life satisfaction for both sexes.

Cuber and Harroff (1963) studied relationships among mid-aged (35-55 years) men and women of the upper class and focused on individual perception of marriage rather than the family or marriage per se. They found that stable marriages are not necessarily stable because they are satisfying. ". . . (A) 'stable' married pair may on the one hand be deeply fulfilled people, living vibrantly, or at the other extreme, entrapped, embittered, resentful people, living lives of duplicity in an atmosphere of hatred and despair" (1963: 141). Their finding raises the question as to why married couples who are dissatisfied with each other remain married.

Saunders (1974) studied empathy and communication in the mid-life period. She found that frequency of communication and self-disclosure does not necessarily draw couples closer together at this period in their lives. Self-disclosure appears to be threatening to the "fictions" constructed over time, particularly for middle-class husbands. She also found that empathy must be reciprocated, especially for wives for either middle or working-class, but again could be threatening if it confirms unlikelihood for change.

Saxton (1979) identified the following success factors when reviewing successful marriages: (1) a happy and well-adjusted childhood, (2) married after the age of 22 years, (3) job preparation and steady income, (4) emotional maturity, (5) shared interest in home, children, sex, love, and religion, and (6) acquaintance of two years or longer before marriage.

Lewis, Beavers, Gossett, and Phillips (1979) in their study of twelve healthy families with a child in mid-adolescence found the husband in these families in the roles of economic provider and family head, with the wife in the traditional roles of wife, mother, and homemaker. Their roles were remarkably complementary. The main focus of the relationship was on the children.

Hayes (1977) refers to Levinger's theory about marriages that end in the middle years. She notes that when forces that tend to keep couples together during the child-rearing years, such as children, finances, religion, and societal pressures, are removed, attractions

outside the marriage influence whether or not they decide to remain in the relationship. Her research on seventy divorced men and women after at least fifteen years of marriage found "that the deciding factor in deciding if the marriage survived during the middle years is the quality of the relationship" as perceived by both partners.

Wachowak and Bragg (1980) found the more open the marriages, the better adjusted are wives, particularly those who are older, have children, and have been married longer. He also found that as the amount of agreement between these wives and their husbands on marital openness increases, the marital adjustment for the wives increases correspondingly. However, for men, no relationship between marital openness and marital adjustment is found, nor is marital adjustment influenced by the amount of agreement with spouse as to marital openness.

Spanier and Lewis (1980) in contrast to Hicks' review of marital happiness during the 1960's, concentrated on research of marital quality in the 1970's. They noted that while responses during the 1960's were for the most part restricted to women who worked at home, the 1970's reported responses of wives who worked outside the home and included more studies of men. However, research on the family life cycle remains scarce and a need to look at the unhappy marriages that stay intact still exists.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

Selection of Subjects

Couples eligible to participate in this study were married for the first time during the 1950's and have continued to remain in that marriage without interruption up to the present time. Various churches and organizations (Appendix A) were contacted by the investigator who explained the study and asked for names of eligible couples known by the contact person or that a request for participants be made via a notice on the bulletin board or in a newsletter. A human interest article, written by Vivian Castleberry (Appendix B), appeared in the Living Section of the Dallas Times Herald on May 29, 1982. The article recounted some of the struggles and changes the investigator and her husband have experienced through their 27 years of marriage. The investigator's study was explained and a request for willing, eligible participants was made. A total of 206 couples responded to the article by telephone or letter to The Center for Pastoral Care and Family Counseling, Inc., practicum site of the investigator. An additional 25 couples responded from other sources.

The final data count was 109 couples, 13 females, and 4 males. Ineligible data was: one couple who indicated a previous marriage, one couple married in 1946 and one male married in 1960. Four questionnaires were received after the cut-off date.

Development of Questionnaire

The Enduring Marriages Questionnaire was designed to determine (a) demographic background of respondents; (b) factors leading up to the marriage; (c) some commonly shared beliefs and activities; (d) specific factors contributing to the continuation of the marriage, i.e., communication patterns, sexual enjoyment, and family enjoyment; (e) stressful situations that the couples may have encountered; and (f) identification of factors within or outside the marriage that may have contributed to the decision to remain married. The questionnaire was adapted from a questionnaire developed by Hayes (1976), for research on divorce in the middle years. It was revised four times by the researcher to adapt to the subject of marriage and to clarify information desired for the purpose of this study.

After the first revision, the questionnaire was given to a pilot group of six people (Appendix C) with instructions explaining the study and asking participants to record the amount of time necessary to complete the questionnaire, and to suggest revisions, additions and deletions deemed necessary for clarity and relevance to the study. The investigator examined the completed questionnaires to determine patterns of responses that appeared. The questionnaire was also reviewed by a research class at Texas Woman's University for clarity, specificity and absences of ambiguity and redundancy. The resulting revised copy was given to three professionals in research (Appendix D) for suggested revisions and comments. The final revised copy (Appendix E) was printed

in booklet form with color coded cover for ease of identification of sex differences.

Data Collection Procedure

Participants who confirmed eligibility by initial telephone contact or letter were mailed two questionnaires with a cover letter (Appendix F) asking husband and wife to answer their questionnaires separately to insure anonymity. Questionnaires were coded to specify couples responding. Participants were asked to indicate if they would be willing to participate in a further study at a later date, and to return the questionnaire in one of the two return-addressed, stamped envelopes provided. Upon receipt of the questionnaire, the information was rechecked to confirm eligibility. Answers on returned questionnaires were recorded on Scantron sheets for use in the computer analysis.

Analysis of Data

Percentages and frequency of all responses were computed. The Chi Square test was used to determine significant differences in responses according to sex and educational levels. Data analysis was accomplished by computer. The .05 level of significance was established as the alpha level.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Demographic Data of Subjects

The total number of subjects was 235, which consisted of 109 couples, 13 females and 4 males. Male subjects were between the ages of 41 and 62 with the mean age of 49.6. Female subjects were between the ages of 41 and 57 with the mean age of 47.6. Age at the time of marriage ranged for the males from 17 to 31 years, and for the females from 16 to 27. The mean ages of males and females when married was 22.2 and 20.3. Year of marriage was fairly evenly dispersed among the 1950's, with the largest groups married in 1953 and 1957. Number of children ranged from 0 to 8 with the mean being 2.8.

Educational levels are shown in Table 1. The largest percentages of men indicated that they graduated from college, while the highest percentage of women completed some college. Due to the low number of subjects in the "less than high school" level, these subjects were included in the "high school" level for analysis. All 235 subjects were included. All subjects were Caucasian with the exception of one black couple.

Religious affiliations are shown in Table 2. The majority (80%) of subjects are Protestant. Due to the low number of subjects in the other religious categories, data analysis was distorted and comparisons were limited to differences in responses of spouse and educational levels.

Table 1
Educational Levels

<u>Categories</u>	<u>Males</u>		<u>Females</u>	
	f	%	f	%
Less than high school	7	6.3	2	1.6
High school	15	13.3	28	23.0
Some college	24	21.2	44	36.0
B.A. degree	38	33.6	28	23.0
Post-graduate work	29	25.6	20	16.4

n = 113 males, 122 females

Table 2
Religious Affiliations

<u>Categories</u>	<u>Males</u>		<u>Females</u>	
	f	%	f	%
Protestant	91	80.5	97	79.5
Catholic	11	9.8	13	10.6
Jewish	3	2.7	3	2.5
Other	4	3.5	5	4.1
None	4	3.5	4	3.3

n = 113 males, 122 females

Major categories of occupation of husbands and wives are found in Table 3. One-third of the women said "homemaker". The largest percentage of men are in sales. Income levels are indicated in Table 4. Over half of the subjects are in the \$50,000 and above income level.

Generally speaking, the majority of the subjects are white, upper middle class, fairly well-educated Protestants.

Question Analysis

Responses to questions were analyzed according to variables of sex and education. Comparisons between responses of husbands and wives were limited to the 109 couples. Educational levels were divided into four groups: (1) high school or less, (2) some college, (3) completion of B.A., and (4) post-graduate work. All 235 subjects were included.

Question Analysis According to Sex and Education

Question 13, "How long did you know each other before marrying?", indicated no significant difference in responses between spouses. The highest percentage of couples said that they knew each other over two years before marrying, 45.0 and 48.1, males and females respectively.

Significant differences appear in responses in educational levels. A higher percentage of high school or less responded either "less than 6 months" or "over 2 years" ($\chi^2 = 20.5$, 9df, $p = .02$).

The list of ratings given by spouses in response to Question 14, "What were the reasons for deciding to marry?", is shown in Table 5. No significant differences were found in responses according to sex or education.

Table 3

Occupations - Males and Females

<u>Occupations</u>	<u>Female</u>	
	f	%
Housewife	40	32.8
Clerical	24	19.7
Sales	17	13.8
Teaching	13	10.7
Administrative	10	8.2
Medical Asst.	9	7.4
Self-employed	5	4.1
Misc.	4	3.3
n = 122		

<u>Occupations</u>	<u>Male</u>	
	f	%
Sales	20	17.7
Engineering	15	13.4
Skilled Labor	13	11.5
Mid-management	12	10.6
Professional	11	9.7
Financial	8	7.1
Teaching	6	5.3
Government Service	5	4.4
Consultant	5	4.4
Executive	5	4.4
Misc.	13	11.5
n = 113		

Table 4
Income Levels

<u>Income</u>	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	f	%	f	%
10,000 - 20,000	2	1.8	0	0
20,001 - 35,000	21	18.8	25	20.5
35,001 - 50,000	35	31.2	38	31.1
50,001 - 75,000	35	31.2	38	31.1
Over 75,000	19	17.0	21	17.3

n = 234

1 missing observation

Table 5
Major Reasons for Deciding to Marry

<u>Reasons</u>	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>		p
	f	%	f	%	
In love	104	95.4	104	95.4	.9
Companionship	76	70.4	74	67.9	.8
He/she would make you happy	75	69.4	81	74.3	.7
Strong sexual attraction	71	65.7	68	62.4	.7

Responses to Question 15, "Did you have any second thoughts about following through with the wedding once plans were set in motions?", found no significant differences in responses of spouses. An overwhelming majority (84.3 and 78.9) of men and women had no doubts about following through with the wedding once plans were set in motion. Those who did have doubts, Question 16, indicate that they "decided they were normal jitters". No significant differences were found in educational levels in response to Questions 15 and 16.

Question 17, "What were your beliefs about sexual relations before marriage?", found a significant differences in responses of sexes. More women, 69.7, than men, 49.5, checked ". . . wrong outside of marriage" ($\chi^2 = 18.4$, 4df, $p = .001$). No significant differences were found in educational levels in response to Question 17.

Question 18, indicating similarities of backgrounds concerning socio-economics, religion, education, age, and race, found no significant differences in responses of spouses or educational levels. The same is indicated for Question 19 concerning similar goals. High percentages of similarities were found in responses in all areas.

Expected roles at the time of marriage, role changes over the years, present roles, Questions 20, 21, and 22, found no significant difference in responses in the two categories analyzed. Expected roles at the time of marriage found agreement between spouses that men were providers, wives homemakers, 51% to 42%. More women perceived themselves as doing most of the household chores when both worked than men, 16.1 to 10.1.

There was also agreement in role changes over the years, with most indicating some change. A change appeared in homemaker role, with 43.0% of men and 35.8% of women checking "wife homemaker/husband provider."

No significant differences were found in responses of husbands and wives concerning degrees of agreement in areas of finances, in-laws, leisure, work, and religion, Question 23. A high percentage specified total or moderate agreement in all areas. Educational levels show no significant differences in responses.

No significant difference was found in responses of spouses to Question 24, "Is your spouse easy to talk to?" ($p = .07$). However, Question 25, "Are you easy to talk to?", found a significant difference in responses. More wives believed they are easy to talk to while fewer husbands self report that they are ($\chi^2 = 11.12, 2df, p = .001$). Men's responses to both questions indicate a significant difference in how they rate themselves and their wives in ease of talking to. Men rated their wives easier to talk to "most of the time", than themselves ($\chi^2 = 14.02, 3df, p = .001$). No significant differences were found in education in responses to either Question 24 or 25.

Question 26 found several significant differences between the responses of sexes in how they handle communication problems. Responses to A, "is a poor listener", showed that more wives believe their spouses are poorer listeners than themselves and husbands concur ($\chi^2 = 14.8, 3df, p = .002$).

Responses to C, "is unable to express self", found a significant

number of wives responding that spouses are unable to express themselves ($\chi^2 = 8.9, 3df, p = .03$). Responses to E, "is unable to express feelings", again found more wives than husbands checking "spouse" and husbands checking "self" ($\chi^2 = 16.9, 3df, p = .001$).

"Talks too much", item G, indicates that more women admit to talking too much, with men agreeing ($\chi^2 = 11.7, 2df, p = .003$). However, the majority of both husbands and wives indicated that neither had any of the communication problems listed. Table 6 shows significant differences in responses to communication problems. No significant differences in responses to Question 26 were found in the four educational levels.

Question 27, concerning communication time, found agreement between the sexes, and the educational levels. A large majority checked either "daily" or "several times a week" in all categories.

Question 28, concerning conflict (Table 7), found that most husbands, 84.3%, and wives, 85.6% checked "verbally", either for self, spouse or both. A significant difference was found in responses to item B, "physically". Due to the low cell frequency, the difference may be distorted ($\chi^2 = 10.4, 3df, p = .02$).

Significant differences appear in responses to "avoidance". More wives indicate that their husbands use avoidance in dealing with conflict and husbands tend to agree ($\chi^2 = 12.1, 3df, p = .007$). Responses to "crying" follow the traditional belief that women cry more than men. Twenty men checked spouse, none checked self, and 22 women checked self

Table 6
Communication Problems

Question	Males				Females			
	spouse f	%	self f	both f	spouse f	%	self f	both f
a. is a poor listener $\chi^2 = 14.8, 3df, p = .002$	12	11.1	29	7	32	29.4	14	6
			26.9	6.5			12.8	5.5
			%	%			%	%
c. is unable to express self $\chi^2 = 8.9, 3df, p = .03$	11	10.1	14	4	27	24.8	14	5
			12.8	3.7			12.8	4.6
			%	%			%	%
e. is unable to express feelings $\chi^2 = 16.9, 3df, p = .0007$	14	12.8	22	4	35	32.1	12	10
			20.2	3.7			11.0	9.2
			%	%			%	%
g. talks too much $\chi^2 = 11.7, 2df, p = .003$	17	15.6	8	0	11	10.1	26	0
			7.3	0			23.9	0
			%	%			%	%

Table 7

Handling Conflict and Strong Disagreement

<u>Question</u>	<u>Males</u>				<u>Females</u>				<u>p</u>					
	<u>spouse</u> f	<u>self</u> f	<u>both</u> f	<u>spouse</u> %	<u>self</u> f	<u>both</u> f	<u>self</u> %	<u>both</u> %						
a. verbally	21	16	54	19.4	14.8	54	50.0	12	11.5	28	26.9	49	47.1	.1
b. physically	6	1	1	5.6	.9	1	.9	0	0	3	2.8	4	3.7	.03
c. avoidance	12	36	14	11.0	33.0	14	12.8	25	22.9	17	15.6	19	17.4	.007
d. crying	20	0	0	18.3	0	0	0	0	0	22	20.2	0	0	.0001

and none checked spouse ($\chi^2 = 43.0$, 3df, $p = .0001$). No significant differences were found in responses in the educational levels.

Responses to Question 29, concerning increase or decrease in conflict, found more wives answering "less" compared to husbands "remained the same" ($\chi^2 = 10.3$, 3df, $p = .02$). The largest percentage of both spouses checked "less", 46.8 and 66.4. No significant differences were found in responses in the educational levels.

Question 30, "Do you and your mate have similar values?", revealed close agreement between spouses with 86.2% and 91.7%, men to women, responding "yes". No significant differences were found in responses in the educational levels.

Responses to Question 31, concerning rights to be different in areas where differences appear, found no significant differences in the two categories.

Question 32, "Do you consider your mate to be a good friend?", found a majority of both husbands (90.8) and wives (85.3) responding "yes". No significant differences were found in responses in the educational levels.

Question 33, dealing with sharing interests and activities, found a significant difference in husbands' and wives' responses to "entertaining", with more wives than husbands indicating a shared interest ($\chi^2 = 3.9$, 1df, $p = .05$). Table 8 lists major shared activities of spouses. A significant difference appeared in educational levels in responses to "travel". More subjects with post-graduate work shared

Table 8

Shared Activities/Interests

<u>Activities/Interests</u>	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>		p
	x	%	x	%	
Dining out	99	90.8	100	93.5	.6
Travel	90	82.6	83	76.1	.3
Movies/TV	80	73.4	82	76.6	.7
Church activities	66	60.6	66	61.1	1.0
Entertaining	62	56.9	77	70.6	.05

travel as a common activity than those who had completed some college ($\chi^2 = 15.7, 3df, p = .001$). No significant differences were found in the two categories in response to Question 34, concerning increase or decrease of shared interests.

Question 35, indicating rituals or traditions, found no significant differences in responses in the two categories. Over 90% of the couples observe family traditions such as holidays and/or birthdays.

Questions 36 and 37, how often is love expressed, found 81.5% of the men and 77.0% of the women indicating an expression of love toward spouse daily or weekly. Correspondingly 78.7% of both men and women responded that their spouses expressed love daily or weekly. Responses to Question 38, concerning degree of satisfaction expressed, revealed that 92.5% of the men and 90.8% of the women were very or moderately satisfied. No significant differences were found in the educational levels in response to Questions 36, 37, or 38.

Question 39 asked subjects to answer for themselves and spouses, "Has there been a change in the enjoyment of sex over the years?". No significant difference was found in the self reporting between sexes. However, responses asking subjects to judge their spouses' enjoyment revealed a significant difference, with 61.1% of the men versus 44.8% of the women believing their spouses are enjoying sex more over the years ($\chi^2 = 7.8, 3df, p = .05$). No significant differences were found in responses in the educational levels.

Responses to Question 40, "Are you and your spouse able to talk to

each other about sexual relations?", found a significant difference between males and females ($x^2 = 8.2$, 3df, $p = .04$). More men checked "most of the time" and "seldom" than women. Four women compared to no men checked "never". No significant differences were found in responses according to educational levels.

Question 41, concerning satisfaction with the sexual relationship of self and perceived satisfaction of spouse found no significant differences in responses of spouses or educational levels. Responses indicate that both men and women (91.7% and 88.0%) are more satisfied with their sexual relationship than their spouses perceive they are (86.6% and 84.5%).

Questions 42 and 43, dealing with reciprocal contribution to feelings of self-esteem, found a significant difference between responses of husbands and wives in regard to mate's contribution. More wives than husbands marked "little" or "none" ($x^2 = 8.5$, 3df, $p = .04$). However, most husbands and wives marked "very much" or "moderate", 93.5% and 82.0%. No significant differences were found in responses according to educational levels.

Question 44, relating to amount of laughter and joy in the home indicated a high degree of agreement between spouses and in educational levels, with 94.5% of the men and 94.4% of the women responding "very much" or "moderate". None responded "none".

Questions 45 and 46, asking about levels of trust, found no significant differences in responses of spouses or in educational levels.

A high percentage of all categories checked "completely". All of the husbands checked either "completely" or "most of the time" when asked "do you trust your spouse".

Question 47, relating to personal problems that have had a negative effect on the marriage found significant differences between responses of spouses in the areas of dependency and emotional stability. Item G, "overly dependent" found 23.1% of the women marking "self", 1.9% marking "spouse" while 4.6% of the men marked "self", 13.8%, "spouse" ($\chi^2 = 24.9$, 3df, $p = .0001$). Item I, "emotional stability", found 15.6% of the women, 4.6% of the men marking "self", 1.8% women, 11.0% men marking "spouse" ($\chi^2 = 13.7$, 3df, $p = .003$). No significant difference was indicated in responses according to educational levels.

Responses to Question 48, concerning health of self and spouse, found no significant differences between husbands and wives. Over 90% of both sexes indicate "very good" or "moderate". A significant difference appears between responses of wives concerning how they rate their own health compared to how they rate their husband's health ($\chi^2 = 7.2$, 2df, $p = .03$), with wives rating their spouses' health better than their own.

A significant difference appeared in the responses according to educational levels. Subjects with some college and high school rate themselves lower in health than those with a B.A. degree or more ($\chi^2 = 18.16$, 6df, $p = .006$). Due to the low cell frequency, some distortion may exist.

No significant difference was revealed in responses of spouses to Questions 49 and 50, rating satisfaction of personal appearance of self and spouse. A higher percentage of both sexes (77.1% and 71.6%) were more satisfied with their spouses' appearance than their own (41.3% and 41.3%). No significant differences in responses were found in the educational levels.

Questions 51, 52, and 53, concerning enjoyment, discipline, and satisfaction of children found no significant differences in responses in regard to sex and education. Spouses agreed that almost 80% of the wives enjoyed their children "very much". Over 85% agreed on child rearing methods "always" or "most of the time", and almost 90% are moderately or very satisfied with the way the children have turned out.

Effect of husband's job, Question 54, showed no significant difference in responses in either category. Only about 20% of both sexes responded "work came first, family neglected".

Responses according to sex and education found no significant differences on Question 55, "Has the wife worked during the marriage?". Only 6.4% of the wives responded "all of the marriage" and "never". The majority indicated "off and on".

Question 56, effect of wife's job, found no significant difference in responses. Over 80% indicated ". . . family first" or "no effect".

Question 57, concerning amount of support for women's movement for equality of self and spouse, found no significant differences in responses of spouses upon self-disclosure. A significant difference was

indicated in evaluation of spouse's position on the Women's Movement. Men tended to view their wives as more supportive than self reported, while fewer women believed their husbands to be "very supportive" than men reported themselves to be ($\chi^2 = 13.6$, 3df, $p = .004$).

A significant difference appeared on both self reporting and spouses' perception in responses of the different educational levels. The highest self reporting support, percentage-wise, was in the post-graduate level, with lowest support in the "some college" category ($\chi^2 = 19.7$, 9df, $p = .02$). The same is true in responses calling for evaluation of spouses' support ($\chi^2 = 17.8$, 9df, $p = .04$).

Question 58, "Could you presently support yourself?", found a significant difference in responses according to sex and educational levels. Only 7.5% of the women compared to 81.7% of the men indicated that they could support themselves "in the manner I am accustomed" ($\chi^2 = 121.2$, 2df, $p = .0001$). A large majority, 60.4%, of the post-graduate subjects indicated that they could support themselves "in the manner I am accustomed" compared to 29.9% of the group with some college ($\chi^2 = 15.4$, 6df, $p = .02$).

Question 59, concerning dominance at the beginning of marriage, found that more wives, 48.1% vs. 35.8%, viewed their husbands as dominant, while more husbands, 49.6% vs. 32.4%, checked "equal". However, no significant difference was found. Responses in educational levels also indicated no significant differences.

Responses of spouses to Question 60, regarding any change in

dominance, found a significant difference, with 67.0% of the men checking "no" compared to 49.1% of the women ($\chi^2 = 7.1$, 1df, $p = .008$).

Spouses who checked "yes" agreed that the major change was that they became more equal. No significant differences were found in responses of subjects in regard to educational levels.

Question 61, evaluating the amount of freedom in the marriage found a significant difference in responses of spouses to E, "activities" ($\chi^2 = 7.6$, 2df, $p = .02$). Due to low cell frequency, some distortion may have appeared. The lowest percentage of "great deal" of both sexes was "opposite sex friends", 43.5% and 40.0%. No significant differences were found in responses of subjects in regard to education.

Question 62, regarding extra-marital sexual relationships, found a significant difference in the responses of spouses, with 17.6% of the wives compared to 32.1% of the husbands answering "yes" ($\chi^2 = 5.3$, 1df, $p = .02$). No significant differences were indicated in responses according to educational levels.

Question 63, indicating effects of extra-marital sex found that the only response of spouses with a significant difference was "no effect--not a serious relationship" ($\chi^2 = 7.1$, 1df, $p = .008$). The finding supports the traditional belief that men have more permission to have casual extra-marital affairs than women. The major effects on the marriage are listed in Table 9.

Reaction of the few spouses who were aware, Question 64, indicated that most of them were initially very disturbed, but some became

Table 9

Major Effects of Extra-marital Sex on Marriage

<u>Effects</u>	<u>Males</u>		<u>Females</u>		<u>p</u>
	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	
I learned to appreciate spouse more	17	14.7	9	8.3	.2
No effect, not a serious relationship	13	11.9	2	1.9	.008
Fulfilled needs that spouse did not, thus making the marriage more endurable	11	10.1	5	4.7	.2
Helped me through a difficult period in the marriage	10	9.2	11	10.2	.5
I learned new things about myself that I brought back into the marriage relationship	7	6.4	9	8.4	.7
Brought spouse and me closer together because of spouse's understanding	7	6.4	5	4.6	.8
I learned how to build and maintain qualities in a relationship	6	5.5	3	2.8	.5
Hurt the marriage because of reaction of spouse	5	4.6	5	4.6	.6

understanding. No significant difference was found in responses in educational levels.

Responses to Question 65, "Do you find your spouse sexually exciting?", found more men, 70.6%, responding "usually" than women, 64.8%. However, no significant difference was found in either category.

Question 66, concerning knowledge of spouse's affair, indicated that approximately half of the spouses knew about it. No significant differences in responses were revealed in either category.

Responses to Question 67, "If yes, what was your reaction?", found similarities to spouses reaction, and no significant differences were indicated in responses between spouses' educational levels.

Question 68, "If you could do it again, would you marry the same person?", found a high percentage of both men (88.1) and women (78.5) responding "yes". The percentages were spread fairly evenly among educational levels.

Table 10 shows the major forces indicated by spouses "that keep you in the relationship", Question 69. No significant differences were found in spouses' responses or in educational levels.

No significant difference was found in responses between spouses or educational levels to Question 70, concerning the possibility of divorce. Most mates checked "no" (88.9%, 89.8%).

No significant difference was found between couples or among educational levels in responses to Question 71, concerning counseling.

Question 72, kinds of counselors, indicated no significant

Table 10
Forces that Sustain the Marriage

<u>Major Reasons</u>	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	f	%	f	%
a. the children's welfare	13	12.1	23	21.4
d. financial necessity	7	6.6	19	17.6
e. religious reasons	13	14.9	16	14.9
f. lack of alternatives	10	9.3	8	7.5
j. fear of divorce process	10	9.3	8	7.5
k. fear of being alone	13	12.0	14	13.1

differences in responses. The highest percentage in all categories consulted a Marriage/Family Counselor. Over 40% of the males and females have received some counseling. Marriage satisfaction, Question 73, found no significant difference in responses of spouses or in educational levels.

Question 74 was an open ended question asking subjects to report any incidents, insights, situations, or reasons not already covered that they deemed important to the fact that they remain married. No statistical analysis was computed. Discussion of responses is found in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

Couples who married during the 1950's have witnessed countless changes in attitudes of society toward marriage in general, sexual behavior, roles of men and women, and divorce. They reared their children during the drug revolution and the Vietnam War. In spite of the number of marriages ending in divorce, many of these couples have remained in their original marriage relationship. The purpose of this study was to examine some of these marriages to determine if common factors appear that influence the continuation of the marriage, and if so, what factors appear to be most prevalent.

Research on marriage during the post-parental period has been limited and the results somewhat contradictory. Children have been reported as both a strength to the marriage and as a hinderance. Most of the research has focused on marriage satisfaction in the earlier years of marriage. Recently, more attention has been on the effects of aging and retirement on the married couple. There remains a void in research on the middle stage, and particularly on why men and women choose to remain in an unhappy relationship. In order to investigate marriages in the mid-state, a questionnaire was developed to determine patterns of communication, common values and interests, mutual satisfactions, and forces both inside and outside the marriage that influence the relationship.

A total of 235 subjects, i.e., 109 couples, 4 men, and 13 women, were used as subjects. The 109 couples' responses were used in the comparative analysis between males and females.

Discussion

Responses of Subjects

Response to the article in the Dallas Times Herald was immediate and long-lasting. Requests to participate in the study came primarily from the Dallas Metroplex area. However, requests also came from the Texas cities of Waco, Austin, Victoria, Ft. Worth, and Denton, and states of New York, Illinois, Nebraska, Colorado and West Virginia. Over 50% of those volunteering as subjects completed the questionnaires and mailed them back to the investigator in the envelope provided. Approximately 80% of the responding subjects indicated an interest in the results and willingness to participate in a follow-up study. The form requesting the results and further participation necessitated an additional envelope and stamp from the subjects, which seemed to indicate an interest in learning about how other marriages during the 1950's were managing today. All but three couples followed instructions to mail questionnaires in the separate envelopes provided.

General Information about Subjects

The couples followed several of Saxton's (1979) guidelines for a successful marriage. The average age at the time of marriage was 20.3 for the wives, 22.2 for the husbands. A large percentage had known each other over two years, had similar backgrounds in such areas as

socio-economics, religion, and education and had similar goals for their lives when they married.

A large number of couples followed the expected and complementary roles at that time, namely, wife homemaker, husband provider. Only seven wives have worked all their married lives and seven wives have never worked. Over 65% have worked for a short period of time or off and on during the marriage. The women did not think in terms of a career for themselves, but as helpmates for their husbands' careers. Over half of the wives who do work outside the home are also responsible for the household chores. An interesting observation was the number of husbands who listed their wives' occupation as "homemaker" when she indicated part-time work. This follows the expected role of the wife by the husband at that time. One wonders how young people today, with women seriously pursuing careers of their own, will adjust to the demands of marriage adjustments over a long period of time.

A positive finding was the lack of physical abuse. Arguments may be avoided, admittedly, but violence was not used.

Over 75% of the couples in this study have an annual income of \$35,000 and above. A few couples referred to financial struggles in the earlier years, but acknowledge and appreciate the rewards of being financially secure now. The large difference between responses on ability to support oneself financially also emphasizes the role of provider for the man, since only eight women believe they can support themselves in the present manner in which they are living.

Financial responsibility for the family and some relief of that responsibility now that the children are leaving or have left home was mentioned by several husbands. The couples are now freed to pursue attractive outside activities which could rejuvenate the relationship.

Support of Women's Movement

Although subjects were married before the main thrust for the Women's Movement for equality was felt, one-third of the couples indicated that both spouses were supportive. Another one-fourth of the couples were non-supportive. Twenty-five wives were supportive, while their husbands were not, and five husbands indicated support although their wives were non-supportive. Subjects for or against the movement did not fall into any particular category of income level, occupation, or degree of marital satisfaction.

Extra-marital Sex

Although conservative reports indicate that 60% of married men and 40% of married women have had extra-marital sex, the percentages for the subjects of this study are considerably lower, i.e., 32% of the men admitted to an extra-marital affair, 17% of the women. Fidelity seems to be important to the majority of the people in this study. However, one wonders if that is always by choice. One woman who is a homemaker adds, ". . . but, then, I don't have an opportunity to meet any men to develop a . . . relationship." Ten couples indicated that both spouses had been involved with someone else. Effects of extra-marital affairs on the marriages are discussed in more detail in the next section.

Couples

To facilitate discussion of differences in various couples, the couples were divided into two major groups: (1) Group A, couples where neither partner indicated having extra-marital sex, and (2) Group B, where one or both partners indicated having extra-marital sex.

Group A consists of 67 couples, or 61% of the subjects. Forty-four of these couples indicate no outside forces influencing their relationship. Many of the subjects wrote "love", "respect" and "commitment" when asked about outside forces. Communication is frequent, love is expressed daily or weekly and the partners are satisfied with the amount of affection expressed. The spouses contribute to each other's self-esteem, trust levels are high and there is much laughter and joy in the home.

Children were enjoyed by both spouses, somewhat more by wives than husbands, but that is understandable since most of the husbands took their role as primary provider seriously, and half of the wives were homemakers. However, all but one husband indicated that although work was important, the family was first. Religion plays an important part in the lives of a number of these couples. Family traditions were observed and holidays were celebrated.

All of these couples are enjoying sex as much as ever, if not more-- and with each other! There is some confusion about each other's enjoyment, however, with some of the spouses indicating spouse's enjoyment less than it actually is. They find their partners sexually exciting

and are harder on themselves in judging personal appearances than on their spouses.

The couples expressed strong love for each other, a commitment to the marriage and a desire to work through the difficulties that did arise. They know each other's communication patterns, and most indicate that conflict has decreased over the years. One woman checked "become more frequent", but added that for them, that meant that they were communicating more and that was a plus. The couples shared a number of activities and interests and were anxious to write in additional shared activities not listed, such as camping, reading, discussions, etc. A typical comment of this group by one of the wives is, "We have gained more respect for each other over the years as our love matured." Comments by two husbands were, "We enjoy each other", and "She's the greatest!". Only five couples have gone for counseling and three of them indicated that it was a positive experience. None foresee the possibility of divorce in the future.

The next subgroup of Group A, 16 couples, indicates some dissatisfaction by one or both partners concerning their sexual relationship. Some outside forces influencing the relationship are mentioned, primarily, the children's welfare, religious and financial reasons. Affection is expressed less frequently by some and some of the couples are less satisfied with the amount of affection expressed. Problems with alcohol and illness, both physical and emotional, are mentioned by half of the couples.

Again, the words "love", "commitment" and "determination" are used. More comments are made about working through their difficulties. Although the vast majority of these couples indicate no divorce, a few spouses said "uncertain". Twelve of the couples indicated that one or both had gone for counseling. One wife stated that counseling had saved the marriage and now "it is better than ever".

In the seven remaining couples in this group, dissatisfaction with their sexual relationship was expressed by one or both of the spouses. One or both seldom or never found their partner sexually exciting. Some reasons given for staying together were "need for security", "fear of failure", "fear of rejection or disapproval of children", "forbidden in Scripture", and "lack of interest in trying anything else". It would be interesting to know if general dissatisfaction with the marriage affected their sexual relationship or visa versa.

A strong sense of obligation to the family was expressed by two of the husbands, perhaps adding to or being a cause of resentment. One or both partners in four of the couples had gone for counseling. Three of the four couples indicated the possibility of divorce.

Group B consists of 43 couples, or 39% of the subjects, where one or both spouses indicated an extra-marital affair. Eighteen of the couples are similar to the first subgroup of Group A. They communicate often, express affection often, and are satisfied with the amount of affection. They are enjoying sex with each other and enjoy their children and family life. Love is mentioned by a large majority of the

spouses as the main reason for staying together.

Although five of the wives have had an affair, none of their husbands expressed a knowledge of it. Eight husbands have had brief affairs without knowledge to their wives and another six whose wives were aware. One couple had each had an affair while the husband was overseas. Another three couples were separated for business reasons at the time of the affairs. Basically, all 18 couples have good marriages and are committed to making it work. Only one husband was unsure about the possibility of divorce. Responses indicate if the marriage has enough internal strength, it can overcome an extra-marital affair and still be strong and satisfying. Spouses who were aware of the relationship indicated being disturbed at first, but working through the initial response to eventual acceptance. One wife who had not had an outside relationship herself and knew of her husband's affair said, ". . . We have spend . . . delightful years together and feel even some of the problems made us stronger and our love grow." A husband who has had an affair stated, "My wife is . . . the most loving and understanding person I have ever known. . . . I love her more today than yesterday."

Another group of 19 couples who indicated outside affairs were not as satisfied with their relationship or their sex life. More outside forces influencing the marriage were expressed, such as "fear of being alone", "lack of alternatives", "fear of divorce process", in addition to children's welfare, religious and financial reasons.

Ten of the 19 couples indicate health or emotional problems of one

of the partners, alcoholism, loss of a child or children, and/or attempted suicide. Although these couples admit that they are struggling with their relationship, 16 out of the 19 respond "no" to the possibility of divorce. They indicate determination to work problems out and express enough love and commitment to each other to stay in the marriage. Some express a degree of resignation. One wife responded, "He's not perfect, but neither am I! We worked out (infidelity) and realized we were married by choice. Life has been better again." Another woman said, ". . . realized I probably would not be any happier with any change, divorce, another mate, etc. To me, happiness is a state of mind." And another who has had a lover states, "I have so much invested in my marriage and family that I don't want to abandon it if there is any way to save myself and my sanity. . . ."

The last group of six couples is not as optimistic about their relationship. They have either a poor or nonexistent sex life and their communication is poor. Their satisfaction with affection is low and there appears to be a low degree of contribution to each other's self-esteem. Little joy or laughter exists in the relationship.

All six couples have been to counseling, but obstacles appear larger than solutions. Problems seem to have been in the marriages for a long time and grown worse instead of better. Emotional illness has taken its toll. One husband whose wife is in poor health states, "Marriage was secondary to my existence. Had I focused on it as being more important, I probably would have made some changes." A wife states, "I don't know

why I stay married. (It) . . . has become a habit. If I find another man to love, I shall leave my husband. He's a good friend, but not a lover and I want a lover." All six couples listed "fear of being alone" or "fear of divorce process" as influencing their decision to remain in an unsatisfying relationship. It appears that the fear of the unknown is stronger, at present, than the familiarity with an unrewarding marriage.

Conclusions and Implications

A number of the couples in this study exhibit a high degree of love, respect for each other, sexual fidelity, and commitment to their marriage vows after more than 20 years of marriage. Even when infidelity did occur, which was much less than the most conservative estimates, it did not necessarily mean the end of the marriage. The couples were not in the poverty level, which freed them from the pressures of day to day survival. Outside forces seem to have more of an influence on their decision to remain married as the amount of internal struggles, such as illness, tragedies, coupled with infidelity increased. Many stated a strong religious faith, but this alone was not the reason for remaining together or for achieving a rewarding relationship. The couples are taking their marriage vows seriously and most of them are continuing to work on their relationship because of their desire to make it work.

The study confirms the value of waiting past the teen years before marrying, knowing each other at least one year before marrying, and having somewhat similar socio-economic, religious, and educational backgrounds.

Very few of the wives seriously considered a career outside the home for themselves at the time of marriage. As more women are seeking to establish themselves in the work force as full-time contributors, it will be interesting to learn how long-term marriages adapt to the increased pressures.

Counseling was received by 40% of these couples, which seems to indicate a more preventive and accepted attitude toward seeking help for their relationship. Marriage Encounter was mentioned as being a constructive force in three of these marriages. Continued effort in the field of counseling toward preventive and educational counseling would seem to be worthwhile. There seems to be a need to provide sexual enhancement learning opportunities for couples in view of the contradictory answers concerning knowledge about each other's sexual satisfaction and enjoyment.

Limitations

A qualitative type questionnaire was used for this study which does not lend itself well to data analysis. Statistics were limited to Chi-square listing of comparative analysis.

The subjects were primarily middle to upper income level, white, Protestants living in the Dallas Metroplex area who had read the Dallas Times Herald news article about the investigator. The study was limited to couples who had married during the decade of the 1950's and who were in their original marriage.

Recommendations

A comparative study of original long-term marriages in different geographic areas would be a worthwhile study to find if subjects in this study are representative of the majority of intact first marriages. Different religious groups, ethnic groups and representatives from different socio-economic levels could be investigated to determine what differences appear.

A follow-up study of these original couples could investigate the family of origin of these subjects to learn what effects their parents' marriages had on their own. Siblings' marriages could be examined to determine if these marriages are characteristic of the entire family.

A high percentage of the subjects indicated a willingness to participate in a further study. A longitudinal study of these marriages would be worthwhile to learn how they adjust to the period of life without children and before retirement. Will the wives remain primarily homemakers, or will they enter the work world now that their jobs as full-time mothers are over? Four wives indicated that they are students. How will their new focus outside the marriage affect the relationship?

A study on the marriages of these subjects' children to determine what effect the parents' marriage had on their own would also be interesting. Will their children have the same strong sense of commitment to work on a marriage relationship over a long period of time? How will their children adjust to the new role expectations of both men and women, and what effect will that have on their marriages versus children whose

parents divorced? Bird (1979) examined the two-paycheck family living in the late 1970's. She found that for every additional \$1,000 earned by the wife, divorce increased by 2%. Continued research needs to be done to determine, if possible, what characteristics must be present to increase the chances of a marriage lasting a lifetime in view of the increased options of lifestyles in today's world.

APPENDIX A

List of Churches and Organizations

List of Churches and Organizations

Center for Pastoral Care and Family Counseling, Dallas, Texas

Dallas Women's Coalition, Dallas, Texas

King of Glory Luthern Church, Dallas, Texas

League of Women Voters, Dallas, Texas

Women's Issues Network, Dallas, Texas

APPENDIX B
Newspaper Article

The restructuring of traditional marriage

Gretchen's needs changed after a while

By VIVIAN CASTLEBERRY

Women's Editor

THE DIVORCE rate in Dallas is the highest of any city in the United States and many people, in a recent study done by the Times Herald, blamed the city with its emphasis on material values and free-wheeling lifestyles for the disintegration of their marriages.

Gretchen Goedecke *credits* the city with saving hers. "The move here (in 1973) saved my sanity and my marriage," she says. "I am convinced if we had not moved (here) when we did, I would have found a way out."

For her master's degree thesis in marriage and family counseling at Texas Woman's University, Gretchen is doing a study of marriages that began in the 1950s and still survive.

"I'm in one of those marriages," she said. "I want to see if other couples in our age group have traveled a similar journey. We went through some exceedingly shaky times. We're far happier now than we've ever been." She pointed to a recent study of 50-year marriages that disappointed researchers when it showed that few of them were happy. Couples in older marriages stayed together for economic reasons and/or because of societal expectations. Only a small percentage of husbands and wives said they would marry the same spouse if they had their lives to live over.

"I am hoping to find that marriages (started in the '50s) and still endure are happier," Ms. Goedecke said. "People don't *have* to stay together anymore if they are miserable."

But, she concedes, her study could very well disprove her hunch. "There may be lots of pressures that still prevail."

Gretchen calls hers *Everywoman's Story of females* who came of age during the 1950s.

She was born in Illinois but reared from age 4 in Houston in a family with two much younger brothers, a father who changed jobs often while trying to find his niche and a mother who worked but hated it. "There was a great deal of bitterness between my parents when I was growing up," Gretchen remembers. Although her mother worked, she didn't provide a role model for working. "My programming was to go to college and find a husband who could support me so I wouldn't have to go through what mother did," Gretchen says.

She and Curtis Goedecke found each other at Rice University where "I had enough drive in me," Gretchen says, "to major in economics and business — one of three women in my class." The couple sat next to each other in class, studied together after class and were married two months after they were graduated in 1955. Both worked for a short time until he went into the Army. She followed him to Fort Chaffee, Ark., where, following her scripting to the letter, she got pregnant. Kurt was born in 1957 in Fort Meade, Md. In the years following Margret ('59), Lisa ('63) and Craig ('65) joined the family.

She bored of 'wifey things'

"I enjoyed my children," Gretchen says. "...grew up with them. We had fun together."

After the Army, Curtis went to work in his family's cotton business, one of a large family working to

gather and living near each other in the small town of Hallettsville.

"I did all the wifey things," Gretchen says. "I was president of every women's organization in Hallettsville. I had full-time help and felt I must do something to earn my way. I learned I had abilities I wasn't aware of. While my husband was trying to find his place in the family business, I learned I was a good and effective leader, organized and competent."

When she wanted to take her skills into the marketplace, Gretchen met family resistance, but prevailed and "learned so much" while working for the Texas Employment Commission. In the meantime Curtis had taken an insurance job in Houston and commuted the 100 miles there and back for two years before he was tapped to manage the Dallas office in 1973.

"I spent two years struggling to find my identity in a large city," Gretchen says. "Things were happening here without Gretchen Goedecke. Instead of my doorbell ringing, I had to seek. In a small town, you're needed. In a big city, you can get lost."

As her oldest son went into his senior year in high school, Gretchen was hit again with what she calls "Everywoman's Life" questions: Who am I? What do I want to be? "I knew nobody was going to call me on the phone with the plan worked out. This was a do-it-myself-project..." She began her exploration with Explore, the three-hour-per-week, eight-week course that guides a woman to ferret her needs, define her

priorities, set her goals and proceed with her life.

The first thing that happened, as so often is the case, was "a lot of anger. My immediate response was blame and fury. It was a very difficult time in the marriage. Curtis was confused and reacting. We sought marriage counseling."

Through her Lutheran church, she also began teaching a Parent Effectiveness Training course. At the close of the Explore year, she was put in charge of training teachers. Each year when Explore ends, an in-depth evaluation is done and top individuals are chosen to lead the next courses. In this way, the program is constantly refreshed with new skills and teachers, only recently having worked their way through, feel deep empathy with new Explorers.

"Very soon my anger burned out. I realized my complicity. I let go of my guilt."

She was now ready for the next step but unsure where to set her feet. It was her son who touched the nerve. "He said to me, 'Don't you see? Every time you come home from working with parents (PET), you are so turned on!'"

The next day, in the fall of 1980, Gretchen applied for graduate school in the marriage and family counseling program at TWU. A full-time student, she also is counseling at the Center for Pastoral Care and Family Counseling, beginning research for her thesis and planning to finish her course work in December. She has already applied to study for her doctorate.

"Curtis," she says, "is still in amazement. I know he's proud. He sees me in a different light and the best part is he's caught the excitement. He's now talking about going back to school!"

Curtis valued traditional relationship

By VIVIAN CASTLEBERRY

Women's Editor

CURTIS GOEDECKE calls himself "a reluctant changer" who "drug my feet all the way" to accepting that his wife could no longer tolerate their traditional marriage.

"I rejected it," said Curtis, branch manager of Transamerica Occidental Life. "because it did not fit the pattern I had of the way things were supposed to be."

From a strong German family, he and Gretchen were in total agreement of the marriage they each thought they were contracting in 1955. He did not spell out in words that he expected her to be a "companion, a good friend and lover," nor did she tell him she wanted a "growing, loving husband." Perhaps, they agree, neither could have articulated those expectations at that time and he "would probably have gagged if I'd read it anywhere."

"When I married, husbands didn't exactly own their wives, but they did make all of the decisions. I expected my wife to take care of the home and children and the domestic chores. I would take care of providing."

For a long time, that's the way things worked. Then Gretchen started to talk about being bored with housework. She suggested getting a job. "I thought, 'What's the matter? I'm not doing a good enough job (of providing economically)?"

"I would say 'You're a part of this team.' And she was. But I was not selling my story to her. What I didn't see was the whole picture. I was receiving accolades from my work. She was getting no strokes from hers. In the social environment, (men and women) were polarized. I was talking about economics and she was talking about housework. The children didn't need her all the time and she was adamant that she did not intend to go to bridge parties and afternoon teas."

It was, Curtis remembers, "a roller-coaster time in the marriage. It caused a lot of turmoil. She wasn't growing, she said."

"About seven or eight years ago, I began to see that she wasn't talking about money. She really wanted a different life. She started to teach

To be a subject ...

Gretchen Goedecke would like couples who were married in the '50s and whose marriages still survive to participate in her study. Her questionnaire is ready to mail. Those who would like to be a part of her survey may call the Center for Pastoral Care and Family Counseling, 821-3680, or write to her at the Center, 3611 Swiss Ave., Dallas 75204.

He gave up on traditions

HIS — From Page One

some Parent Effective Training programs for our church and she loved it. She got involved in Explore and she'd tell me some of the things she was learning. Gretchen's been a tremendous teacher. She's a fantastic counselor. Totally open. Loves people. Understands so much. She's a loving and caring person and she opens my eyes all the time."

He can't pinpoint the moment he decided to give up being the traditional husband, but he does remember "giving her tremendous support" when she said she wanted to go back to school. I thought this was only fair. She'd gone through a hard business course at Rice and I took her away from that. I told her "Go to it, Tiger!" When she ran into trouble getting into graduate school, they worked out together the procedure to get her in.

"She has a perfect four-point average," he boasts.

"I wish," he adds. "I had been more receptive to change. It would have saved a lot of heartache. Now, I'm experiencing great delight. I see her a great deal happier. To see your mate happy can't help but make you feel good."

Curtis relaxes and leans forward. Behind him through windows on the ninth floor of his company's 4835 LBJ Freeway executive office spreads the Dallas skyline.

In a sense, he says, he is supporting Gretchen as she changes her life in the same way she supported him when he changed careers 11 years ago. He decided to leave his family business and strike out on his own. "That was really very, very heavy," he says. "I felt the obligation (to support the family) intensely." He got a job in Houston, stayed with his sister during the week and went home weekends. "I'd be at work at 8:30 every day Monday through late Thursday. Then I'd drive home (Hallettsville), get there around midnight. Leave home at 5:30 Monday morning for the drive back. I'd start to shake when I left the house and have to pull over. I'd be literally violently ill.

"Gretchen could have gone to pieces. She never did. She never once panicked. She'd say 'Hey, it's going to work! Don't sweat it.' She gave me a lot of support."

When he decided to go to work for Occident-

al (since last January Transamerica), and asked for advice from a family member. Curtis says he was told, "Go into anything you want, but for God's sake not insurance."

"So, I had a lot of trouble making that decision. The image of insurance is a policy peddler. Right off I got into the CLU (certified life underwriter). Finished it two years later. Made branch manager soon afterward."

Both on the job and at home, there was "overwhelming pressure and stress. I was carrying an extremely heavy emotional load, a lot of it self-imposed. I have a very big ego... We all play roles. We don't let our true feeling show to the outside world..."

That, he thinks is changing fast. "Young men today don't have nearly the pressure to live a role," he said. "Young men do not feel the obligation to be the total economic support of the family. Young women are much more eager to assume responsibility, too. The roles are not so tied down. There is much more freedom to choose," and therein, he says, lies both strength and weakness. "Both young men and young women are afforded a lot of freedom they abuse."

The Goedecke's own four children have been totally supportive of the family lifestyle changes. "Our children complain that we don't make enough decisions for them! It is imperative that they learn decisionmaking processes. But they know I won't let them self-destruct."

It is equally important, Curtis adds, that children learn married couples have problems. "When a fight starts in the living room, too often the couple settles it behind closed bedroom doors. Gretchen and I let all the dirty laundry hang out. We let them see our problems and how we resolve them. Children need to see both the fight and the resolution and to know that love lasts through."

He doesn't know how his friends and associates feel about the new Goedecke lifestyle, he says. "Men are observant — or they ignore what's going on. Very few offer any support. If they opposed it, they wouldn't tell me. I don't know what they say behind my back!" Women, he adds, "are very supportive. Maybe a little envious."

APPENDIX C
Pilot Group

Pilot Group

Kay Hagadone, M.A., Counselor at Center for Pastoral Care and Family Counseling, Inc., Dallas, Texas.

Charles E. Harris, M. Div., S.P., A.C.S.W., Associate Director and Counselor at Center for Pastoral Care and Family Counseling, Inc., Dallas, Texas.

Judy Harrison, Executive Assistant and Public Relations Coordinator at Center for Pastoral Care and Family Counseling, Inc., Dallas, Texas.

D. Michael Smith, M. Div., Clinical Director and Co-founder of Center for Pastoral Care and Family Counseling, Inc., Dallas, Texas.

Nancy Smith, M.A., Executive Director and Co-founder of Center for Pastoral Care and Family Counseling, Inc., Dallas, Texas.

Anne H. Wagner, Outreach Coordinator, Center for Pastoral Care and Family Counseling, Inc., Dallas, Texas.

APPENDIX D
Professional Researchers

Professional Researchers

Julia Ann Dodson, M.S.S.W., Clinical Administrator, Southwest Family
Institute, Dallas, Texas.

Maggie Hayes, Ph.D., Associate Professor, University of Oklahoma, Norman,
Oklahoma.

Virginia Austin Phillips, Senior Research Associate, Timberlawn Founda-
tion, Inc., Dallas, Texas.

APPENDIX E
Enduring Marriages Questionnaire

ENDURING MARRIAGES
QUESTIONNAIRE

FEMALE COPY

Please check or fill in appropriate answer to each question and be as candid as possible with your answers. There are no right or wrong answers.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Your present age: _____ years
2. Age when married: _____ years
3. Year married in: 195____
4. Your sex: a. _____ male b. _____ female
5. Ages of children: _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____.
6. Highest level of education completed by wife: _____
7. Highest level of education completed by husband: _____
8. Race: _____
9. Religious affiliation:

a. _____ Catholic	d. _____ Mormon
b. _____ Protestant	e. _____ Other: Specify _____
c. _____ Jewish	f. _____ None
10. Occupation of wife: _____
11. Occupation of husband: _____
12. What is your combined yearly gross income?

a. _____ less than \$10,000
b. _____ \$10,000 - \$20,000
c. _____ \$20,000 - \$35,000
d. _____ \$35,000 - \$50,000
e. _____ \$50,000 - \$75,000
f. _____ over \$75,000

COURTSHIP

13. How long did you know each other before marrying?

a. _____ less than 6 months	c. _____ 1 - 2 years
b. _____ 6 months - 1 year	d. _____ over 2 years
14. What were the reasons for deciding to marry? (With 1 as major reason, rank order all that apply)

a. _____ in love
b. _____ companionship
c. _____ he/she would make you happy
d. _____ everyone else was getting married
e. _____ strong sexual attraction
f. _____ was a "good catch" (economically, socially, physically, etc.)
g. _____ thought you might not have another opportunity
h. _____ family, friends expected you to
i. _____ pregnancy
j. _____ an excuse to leave home
k. _____ other: _____

25. Are you easy to talk to?
 a. most of the time
 b. sometimes
 c. seldom
 d. never
26. Does either of you have any of the following communication problems as you talk with each other?
- | | <u>spouse</u> | <u>you</u> |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. is a poor listener | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. is too judgmental | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. is unable to express self | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. engages in meaningless conversation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. is unable to express feelings | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. has fear of conflict | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. talks too much | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h. other: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
27. How often do the two of you take the time to really communicate with each other?
 a. daily
 b. several times each week
 c. about once a week
 d. about once a month
 e. less than once a month
28. How do you usually handle conflict or strong disagreement?
- | | <u>spouse</u> | <u>you</u> |
|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. verbally | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. physically | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. avoiding | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. crying | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. sulking | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. giving in to mate | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
29. Has the amount of conflict gotten more or less through the years?
 a. become more frequent
 b. become less frequent
 c. remained the same
30. Do you and your mate have similar values?
 a. yes b. no c. uncertain
31. In those areas where you differ, does each of you respect the other's right to be different?
 you: a. yes b. no c. undecided
 spouse: d. yes e. no f. undecided
32. Do you consider your mate to be a good friend?
 a. yes b. no c. undecided
33. What kinds of activities/interests do you and your mate share together?
 a. music, arts f. entertaining
 b. outdoor recreation g. travel
 c. political h. movies, TV
 d. social concerns i. dining out
 e. church activities j. other: _____
34. Have the number of shared activities/interests increased or decreased during the years?
 a. increased b. decreased c. remained the same

47. Have you or your spouse had any obvious personal problems that have had a negative effect on the marriage? (with 1 as major reason, rank order all that apply)
- | | <u>you</u> | <u>spouse</u> |
|-------------------------------|------------|---------------|
| a. drug or alcohol dependency | _____ | _____ |
| b. compulsive spending | _____ | _____ |
| c. compulsive gambling | _____ | _____ |
| d. overly dominating | _____ | _____ |
| e. overly submissive | _____ | _____ |
| f. overly independent | _____ | _____ |
| g. overly dependent | _____ | _____ |
| h. chronic adultery | _____ | _____ |
| i. emotion instability | _____ | _____ |
| j. other: _____ | _____ | _____ |
48. How would you rate the general state of health for both you and your spouse during most of your married life?
- | | <u>you</u> | <u>spouse</u> |
|---------------------------|------------|---------------|
| a. very good health | _____ | _____ |
| b. moderately good health | _____ | _____ |
| c. frequent illness | _____ | _____ |
| d. very poor health | _____ | _____ |
49. How satisfied are you with the way your spouse maintains his/her personal appearance?
- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. _____ very satisfied | c. _____ somewhat dissatisfied |
| b. _____ moderately satisfied | d. _____ very dissatisfied |
50. Are you satisfied with your efforts to keep up your personal appearance?
- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. _____ very satisfied | c. _____ somewhat dissatisfied |
| b. _____ moderately satisfied | d. _____ very dissatisfied |
51. Do you and your mate enjoy your children?
- | | <u>you</u> | <u>spouse</u> |
|----------------|------------|---------------|
| a. very much | _____ | _____ |
| b. moderately | _____ | _____ |
| c. very little | _____ | _____ |
| d. not at all | _____ | _____ |
52. Have you and your mate agreed on child rearing methods?
- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| a. _____ always | c. _____ sometimes |
| b. _____ most of the time | d. _____ seldom |
53. How satisfied are you with the way your children have turned out?
- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. _____ very satisfied | c. _____ somewhat dissatisfied |
| b. _____ moderately satisfied | d. _____ very dissatisfied |
54. Has the husband's job affected the marriage relationship in any way?
- | |
|---|
| a. _____ work came first, family was neglected |
| b. _____ work was important, but family was first |
| c. _____ work was not important enough |
| d. _____ no noticeable effect |
| e. _____ other: _____ |
55. Has the wife worked during the marriage?
- | |
|-------------------------------------|
| a. _____ all of marriage |
| b. _____ most of married life |
| c. _____ off and on during marriage |
| d. _____ for a short time |
| e. _____ never |

56. Has the wife's job affected the marriage relationship in any way?
- work came first, family was neglected
 - work was important, but family was first
 - work was not important enough
 - no noticeable effect
 - other: _____
57. What amount of support do you and your spouse have for the women's movement for equality?
- | | <u>you</u> | <u>spouse</u> |
|--------------------------|------------|---------------|
| a. very supportive | _____ | _____ |
| b. moderately supportive | _____ | _____ |
| c. non-supportive | _____ | _____ |
| d. undecided | _____ | _____ |
58. Could you presently support yourself?
- yes, in the manner I am accustomed
 - I could get along
 - no, without spouse's income, I would have to make a change in life style
59. As you started living together, did one of you tend to be more dominant than the other?
- wife dominant
 - husband dominant
 - equal
60. Has this changed through the years?
- yes Explain: _____
 - no
61. How would you evaluate the amount of freedom you have in your marriage relationship regarding:
- | | <u>great deal</u> | <u>moderate</u> | <u>very little</u> | <u>none</u> |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------|
| a. same-sex friends | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| b. opposite-sex friends | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| c. use of time | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| d. use of money | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| e. activities | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
62. Have you engaged in extra-marital sexual relationships at any time during your marriage?
- yes
 - no
63. If yes, how did this (these) relationship(s) affect your marriage? (may be more than one)
- fulfilled needs that spouse did not, thus making the marriage more endurable
 - brought spouse and me closer together because of spouse's understanding
 - hurt the marriage because of comparisons to lover(s)
 - hurt the marriage because of reactions of spouse
 - I learned to appreciate spouse more
 - I learned how to build and maintain qualities in a relationship
 - I learned new things about myself that I brought back into the marriage relationship
 - helped me through a difficult period in the marriage
 - no effect, not a serious relationship
 - other: _____

64. If spouse was aware, what was his/her reaction?
 a. _____ very disturbed
 b. _____ moderately disturbed
 c. _____ indifferent
 d. _____ tolerant
 e. _____ understanding
65. Do you find your spouse sexually exciting?
 a. _____ usually
 b. _____ sometimes
 c. _____ seldom
 d. _____ never
66. Has your spouse had any extra-marital sexual relationships?
 a. _____ yes
 b. _____ no
 c. _____ not sure
67. If yes, what was your reaction?
 a. _____ very disturbed
 b. _____ moderately disturbed
 c. _____ indifferent
 d. _____ tolerant
 e. _____ understanding
68. If you could do it again, would you marry the same person?
 a. _____ yes
 b. _____ no
 c. _____ uncertain
69. Are there forces either within or outside the marriage that keep you in the relationship? (with 1 as major reason, rank order all that apply)
 a. _____ the children's welfare
 b. _____ societal pressures
 c. _____ parental or family pressures
 d. _____ financial necessity
 e. _____ religious reasons
 f. _____ lack of alternatives
 g. _____ physical illness of spouse
 h. _____ physical illness of self
 i. _____ physical illness of child
 j. _____ fear of divorce process
 k. _____ fear of being alone
 l. _____ none
 m. _____ other:Specify: _____
70. Do you foresee the possibility of a divorce in the future?
 a. _____ yes
 b. _____ possibly
 c. _____ unsure
 d. _____ no
71. Have you or has your spouse ever obtained counseling?

	<u>you</u>	<u>spouse</u>
a. yes	_____	_____
b. no	_____	_____
72. If yes for you, what kind (kinds) of counselor did you consult?
 a. _____ Psychiatrist
 b. _____ Psychologist
 c. _____ Social Work Agency
 d. _____ Priest/Pastor
 e. _____ Marriage/Family Counselor
 f. _____ Other, specify _____
73. How would you rate your marriage in terms of your overall satisfaction?
 a. _____ very satisfying
 b. _____ moderately satisfying
 c. _____ somewhat satisfying
 d. _____ moderately dissatisfying
 e. _____ very dissatisfying

74. Looking back over the years of your marriage, are there any incidents, insights, situations, or reasons not already covered that you see important to the fact that you remained married? _____

APPENDIX F
Letter to Participants

July 2, 1982

Greetings to all of you 1950's couples!

Thank you for your response to the article concerning my research project on enduring marriages. Contrary to the statement in the article about the readiness of the questionnaires, they are just this week hot off the presses. I hope the delay between your response and the arrival of this letter has not dampened your enthusiasm for participation.

Enclosed are two questionnaires, one for each spouse. Husbands are to complete the blue copy, wives the beige copy. Please fill out the questionnaires separately and mail each one as soon as possible in one of the two self-addressed stamped envelopes. All responses will be held in strictest confidence. The return of your questionnaire constitutes your willingness to act as a subject in the research and the understanding that Texas Woman's University is not responsible for any injury as a result from participation in this study.

If you would be willing to participate in a longitudinal follow-up study, please fill out the form below and mail in a separate envelope to insure anonymity. I hope to have the findings of the study published in the Dallas Times Herald. However, in case publication does not occur, please indicate if you would be interested in learning of them.

Again, thank you for sharing your thoughts and opinions about your marriage. If you should have any questions following your response to the study, please contact me at the Center for Pastoral Care and Family Counseling, 821-3680.

Very truly yours,

Gretchen Goedecke
Gretchen Goedecke

Mail to Gretchen Goedecke

7155 Hunters Ridge
Dallas, Texas 75248

_____ I am willing to participate in a follow-up study.

_____ I would like to learn the findings of this study.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

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