

THE TRANSITION TO PARENTHOOD: A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXPLORING
THE EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF CERTIFIED *BRINGING BABY HOME*
WORKSHOP INSTRUCTORS

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DEDICATION

To Logan, whose patience, support, and love has been my constant through this wibbly, wobbly timey, whimey process.

To sweet Abagael, whose unexpected arrival sparked my interest in this topic and whose exuberance for all things kept redirecting me on this journey.

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ABSTRACT

ELIZABETH BUZZARD-SPEIGHTS

THE TRANSITION TO PARENTHOOD: A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF CERTIFIED *BRINGING BABY HOME WORKSHOP* INSTRUCTORS

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors. Utilizing a phenomenological framework for this study allowed the participants to give a personal voice to their own experiences and the meaning of their experience came out through the dialogue and reflection about the workshop. A total of 6 certified workshop instructors were interviewed for this study. Instructors ranged in age from 35-64 and were all practitioners currently working in the mental health field.

Interviews were digitally audio taped, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using NVivo 10 to discover common themes. After analyzing the interviews from the certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors, three primary themes emerged. The first theme is The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* is helpful for couples. The second theme is The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* is difficult to execute. Finally, the third theme is The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* has value for practitioners. Additionally, findings, implications for the field, and future research recommendations are discussed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

People have been having children since humans existed. Generally, the birth of a new baby is expected to be a time of joyous celebration and regarded as a positive change in a couple's life. However, research over the past few decades has painted a different picture for a number of parents. Early studies indicated that the transition to parenthood can be a crisis for marriage (Jacoby, 1969; LeMasters, 1957; Russell, 1974). Later research indicated that having a child can create a great deal of stress on a marriage, but researchers have moved away from labeling this stress as a crisis (Belsky & Rovine, 1990; Cowan & Cowan, 1988; Harriman, 1986; Shapiro, Gottman, & Carrere, 2000).

Research through the years has shown a number of consistencies for parents in regards to the transition to parenthood. Belsky, Spanier, and Rovine (1983) found a decline in overall marital adjustment and quality in their longitudinal mixed method study from third trimester of pregnancy to nine months postpartum. Cowan, Cowan, Heming, Garrett, Coysh, Curtis-Boles, and Boles (1985) also employed a longitudinal mixed method study comparing couples who were expecting with those who were not at 2 months postpartum. Their findings indicated that the transition to parenthood brought about negative marital change and that men and women seem to move toward more traditional role orientations. The results suggested that "the increased gender

differentiation accompany[ing] the transition to parenthood is a factor in accounting for marital satisfaction decline” (Cowan et al., 1985, p. 475). Cowan and Cowan (1988) also found, in addition to role changes, that men and women report their experience of the transition to parenthood differently, which is likely to cause stress on the marriage.

Belsky and Rovine (1990) looked at marital change from pregnancy to three months post birth. Their research also demonstrated a decline in overall marital satisfaction and an increase in conflict after the birth of a child. Their findings indicated that a number of factors influenced how parents make the transition to parenthood and that many of those factors are present in the marriage before the birth. Cowan and Cowan (1995) echoed that it is possible to identify couples who are at high risk for experiencing severe negative changes and declines in marital satisfaction. Shapiro et al. (2000) also reported a decline in marital satisfaction for couples when compared to childless couples. Their research additionally sought to identify factors that contribute to marital decline.

Statement of Problem

The need for marital support for first time parents to help facilitate a smoother transition to parenthood is apparent. Interventions supported by research that target problem areas and issues most couples experience as they transition to parenthood could result in a more positive experience for men and women as they expand to include a new baby. Few studies to date have focused on preventive education for couples transitioning to parenthood (Cowan & Cowan, 1995; Shapiro & Gottman, 2005).

In response to the wealth of research demonstrating that the transition to parenthood is, in fact, associated with a decline in overall marital satisfaction and quality, Shapiro and Gottman (2005) created a prevention education program for new and expectant parents based on a 3-year longitudinal study of 38 families that were either expecting or had a baby less than 3 months old at the time of their first interview. The study used a control group and a workshop group with data collections that occurred at 3 points throughout the study. Additionally, the study utilized measures such as the Lock-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test, Derogatis Symptom Checklist for assessing postpartum depression, the Couple's Problem Inventory, and the Specific Affect Coding System was used to code conflict interactions (Shapiro & Gottman, 2005),

Results of Shapiro and Gottman's study indicated that the workshop was effective when compared with a control group using the following variables: observed marital hostility, postpartum depression, and marital quality. Using these results, a two-day workshop, *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* (BBHW), was created to address typical issues that arise in the transition to parenthood, build skills in intimacy and conflict resolution, and inform couples about what to expect from babies. Appendix H contains a detailed list of topics covered. The preventive education program, BBHW, was designed so that family educators would eventually lead and be able to "reach many people with less investment of resources than therapy" (Shapiro & Gottman, 2005, p. 7). To date, this is the only published study on the results of the full 12-hour *Bringing Baby Home Workshop*. A 2009 publication by Gottman, Gottman, and Shapiro discussed the

aforementioned study results and talked about their adaptation of the program for low income couples. However, there have been no studies focusing on certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors and their experiences and perceptions.

It is increasingly common for expectant parents to seek out education in anticipation of becoming a family. Each year thousands of books are published and purchased on motherhood and fatherhood, for example, *What to Expect the First Year*, by Einsberg, Murkoff, and Hathaway (1989). Additionally, classes on childbirth preparation abound (Hulbert, 2003). Unfortunately, prepared childbirth classes spend little to no time focusing on issues within the marriage that typically arise with the addition of a child, whereas the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* was designed to prepare parents for not only the new baby, but also prepare the couple for what can happen to their marriage. However, further research on BBHW is needed to demonstrate the effectiveness of the workshop on marital satisfaction with new and expectant parents.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors. This qualitative study used semi-structured, in-depth interviews with BBHW instructors to explore their perceptions of issues that arise during the transition to parenthood and how the workshop might help to make that a smoother process. Additionally, the study explored emerging themes regarding their experiences with the running of the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* by certified workshop instructors. The research study was also

designed to study couples who had completed a BBHW, but recruiting difficulties prevented any couples from being interviewed. Thus, this study focused only on the perceptions and experiences of the certified BBHW instructors.

Research Questions

To fulfill the purposes of this study, the following research questions guided this study:

1. What, if anything, from the workshop is helpful for couples as they make the transition to parenthood?
2. What was their experience with training and implementing the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop*?
3. What, if anything, from the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* is valuable for the instructors for continuing education in their field?

Theoretical Framework

Family Life Course Theory

Life course theory is a developmental theory that focuses on the individual. This theory of development is interested in the individual's life transitions that occur from birth to death (Chibucos, Leite, & Weis, 2005; Duvall & Kerckhoff, 1958; White & Klein, 2002). Duvall, a leading researcher in this theory, and Kerckhoff (1958) stated that "every member of the family is at work as long as he lives and grows" (p. 334). Elder (1998), another leading researcher in life course theory, believed that the various trajectories in an individual's life provide distinct meaning and that a basic element of the

life course is the developmental implications of those meanings. Elder (1998) further explains that the following four principles drive the life course developmental theory: 1. “[T]he life course of individuals is embedded in and shaped by historical times and places they experience over their lifetime” (p.3), 2. “[T]he developmental impact of succession of life transitions or events is contingent on when they occur in a person’s life” (p. 3), 3. “[L]inked lives are lived interdependently, and social and historical influences are expressed through this network of shared relationships” (p. 4), and 4. “[I]ndividuals construct their own life course through the choices and actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstances” (p. 4).

Conceptual usage over the past few decades has varied and included terms such as *lifeline*, *life cycle*, *life span*, and *life course*. However, it has become more customary for development psychologists to use the term *life span* and sociologist’s to use *life course* (Rossi, 1980). Family life course theory is very similar to life span theory, adding the unique aspect of the family as the focus (Chibucos et al., 2005; Rodgers & White, 1993; White & Klein, 2002).

Family life course theory assumes that families move through certain developmental stages in fairly predictable patterns. A young adult launches, gets married, has children who grow into teenagers who will then launch, and finally that adult moves into later life as their children then move through their own life cycle stages (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; Chibucos et al., 2005; Duvall & Kerckhoff, 1958; Elder, 1998; Rossi, 1980). Within these predictable stages, variations such as divorce and remarriage are not

uncommon and bring about additional development processes (Brown, 1989; Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; McGoldrick & Carter, 1989). White and Klein (2002) defined the focus of family life course development theory as “the systematic and patterned changes experienced by families as they move through stages of their family life course” (p. 89). Family life course theory provides an appropriate theoretical framework for studying the transition to parenthood and marital quality (Umberson, Williams, Powers, Chen, & Campbell, 2005).

Family Systems Theory

Family systems theory has roots in general systems theory. From a general systems perspective, there is a desire to understand complex behavior of an organized system. This theory views the family as a system in which “family members interact with one another, exhibit coherent behaviors, and share some degree of interdependence” (Chibucos et al., 2005, p. 279). An important component of family systems theory is the belief that studying the whole system is greater than only studying the sum of its parts. When observing whole systems, the focus is not so much on the cause of behavior, but rather observing behavior interactions and processes to better understand how each component influences and interacts with the other components (Becvar & Becvar, 1996; Chibucos et al., 2005; White & Klein, 2002; Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993).

The tenets of family systems theory provide a fitting lens for this study on the transition to parenthood. This theoretical framework allows the researcher to view the system as a whole and better understand how all the parts work together. Additionally,

White and Klein (2002) ascertain that family systems theory is a major conceptual framework for the study of marital interactions.

Phenomenology

While phenomenology is not considered by most to be a theory, it was a driving methodology framework for the researcher in this study. A phenomenological framework seeks to understand the lived experiences by exploring the meaning people put on their own experiences. This lens encouraged the participants to give a personal voice to their own experiences and the meaning of their experience came out through the dialogue and reflection about the event. In seeking to better understand the phenomenon, the researcher studied a small number of participants in depth, allowing their own stories and various descriptions of the workshop experience to reveal themes and relationships of meaning. Phenomenology as a framework is well suited to qualitative research that seeks to hear the voice of the participants (Creswell, 2003; Gubrium & Holstein, 1993; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following operational definitions were used. Definitions are listed in alphabetical order for ease of reference.

Bringing Baby Home Workshop: A 2-day psycho-communicative education intervention designed to facilitate a positive and smooth transition for new and expectant parents (Shapiro & Gottman, 2005). Appendix H contains a detailed list of topics covered in the workshop.

Certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* Instructor: An individual who has completed the required BBH training through the Gottman Institute and been certified as a workshop instructor by the Gottman Institute.

Marriage: the state of being united to a person of the opposite sex as husband or wife in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law (The Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2004).

Transition to parenthood: the movement from couple to family through the addition of a child. The actual birth or adoption of the child physically begins the transition; however, the emotional transition more realistically begins when the couple learns they are expecting.

Assumptions

Based on family life course theory, family systems theory, and phenomenology, the following assumptions in this study include:

1. Family developmental processes are inevitable and understanding them is important to further the understanding of families.
2. Transitions are a natural part of the life cycle and family systems will adapt and reorganize.
3. The meaning of an event is subjective and defined through language and self-reflexivity. Understanding this meaning is only possible through viewing the whole system, as all parts of the system are interconnected.

4. The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* is research based and addresses primary concerns and issues of new and expectant parents as they make the transition to parenthood.
5. The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* additionally offers instruction and exercises to strengthen marriages, thus lessening the impact and decline of marital satisfaction that occurs during and after the transition to parenthood.

Delimitations

The instructors in the study were delimited in the following way:

1. Participants have been trained through the Gottman Institute as certified Bringing Baby Home instructors.

The couples in the study would have been delimited in the following ways:

1. Participants were legally heterosexual married couples over the age of 18.
2. Participants were couples who had experienced a first childbirth within the past 2 years.
3. Participants were couples who voluntarily completed a *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* taught by a certified instructor within the past 2 years.
4. Participants were couples who voluntarily took part in the interview after completing the BBHW.

Person of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is not just attempting to objectively gather information, but rather is a participant in the process. Xuehong (2002) states that

“[r]esearch is a process of equal exchange between the researcher and the subject out of which a ‘merging of vision’ is achieved and an understanding of the issue is obtained” (p. 50). The researcher is a doctoral student at Texas Woman’s University in Denton, Texas. The researcher is 35 years old, lives in Ft. Worth, Texas, has been married for ten years, and has a seven-year-old daughter. The researcher is interested in the transition to parenthood as a result of her own experiences surrounding becoming a parent. Recognizing how those experiences have influenced her interest, the researcher endeavored to bracket any preconceptions or biases by being aware when personal things would arise and setting them aside to allow the participant’s stories to be their own.

Summary

The decline of marital satisfaction after the birth of the first child has been established in research (Cowan & Cowan, 1988; Belsky & Rovine, 1990; Harriman, 1986; & Shapiro et al., 2000). There is a need for new and expectant parents to have training and education on how to make a smoother transition to parenthood, and a need for education beyond traditional childbirth education that prepares for the labor and delivery. The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* was created to fill that exact need.

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors. It is hoped that the outcomes of this study will be helpful to practitioners who work with new and expectant parents to help find ways to make the transition a smoother and more pleasant process.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The typical image of a new family during the first few months after the birth of their new baby is of tired and stressed parents struggling to adjust and cope with the demands of the infant. However, the transition to parenthood usually begins when parents learn they are having a child. While pregnancy and childbirth mark the physical portion of this life cycle stage, the psychological and social aspects of parenthood extend throughout the duration of the parent's life (Bradt, 1989). The entrance of a child into the marital dyad will inevitably cause some level of disruption and stress, although a myriad of factors contribute to the degree a marriage is affected.

This chapter is an exploration of the overall impact the transition to parenthood has on marriage. The topic of becoming a family has been an area of major study throughout the past several decades and the focus of the research has varied. This review will be an exploration of the literature in regards to the effect that the transition to parenthood has on marriage. Furthermore, a look at the major areas of research will be covered as follows: 1) the "crisis" of parenthood, 2) the variability in adjustment and related factors, 3) experiences of mothers, and 4) experiences of fathers.

Theoretical Framework

Family life course theory assumes that families move through certain developmental stages in fairly predictable patterns. A young adult launches, gets married,

has children who grow into teenagers who will then launch, and finally that adult moves into later life as their children then move through their own life cycle stages (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; Chibucos, et al., 2005; Duvall & Kerckhoff, 1958; Elder, 1998; Rodgers & White, 1993; Rossi, 1980; White & Klein, 2002). Each developmental stage of the life cycle also has unique challenges that always occur in a social context, which are the general characteristics of the area in which a person lives (Brown, 1989; Craig & Dunn, 2007; Duvall & Kerckhoff, 1958). Carter and McGoldrick (1989) and McGoldrick and Carter (1989) further ascertained that transitional moments in a family's developmental process result in immense stress. Bradt (1989) added that "there is no stage that brings about more profound change or challenge to the nuclear family than the addition of a new child to the family system" (p. 235). This theoretical framework is an appropriate lens for studying the transition to parenthood and marital quality (Umberson, et al., 2005).

The "Crisis" of Parenthood

Early studies of the move to parenthood categorized the transition as a crisis. LeMasters (1957) stated that in regards to the crisis, "the shock is related to the fact that the crisis event forces a reorganization of the family social system. Roles have to be reassigned, status positions shifted, values reoriented, and needs met through new channels" (p. 352). He hypothesized that the birth of a first child would be a critical or "crisis" event and the results of his study substantiated his theory. While most of his

participants found the transition to parenthood difficult, he did assert that for the most part the adjustment was eventually successful (LeMasters, 1957).

LeMasters (1957) went on to explain that “married couples find the transition to parenthood painful because the arrival of the first child destroys the two-person or pair pattern of group interaction and forces a rapid reorganization of their life into a three-person or triangle group system” (p. 354). Russell (1974) agreed and further postulated that the belief of parenthood as a crisis stems from the suggestion of role theory, that the introduction of a child into the marital dyad causes a disruption of intimacy and affection, thus the infant is seen as an intruder. However, Jacoby (1969) and Russell (1974) were of a group who began to move away from the view of parenthood as crisis.

Jacoby (1969) accurately asserted that research viewing parenthood as a crisis has not allowed room for the reporting of neutral or even positive attitudes felt during the adjustment that parenthood requires. Moreover, there will be some individuals who experience small role changes as highly problematic and those who are able to manage major role changes with equanimity. Additionally, the perspective of crisis oriented parents can lead people to think in terms of negative outcomes instead of the gratifications that are a result of becoming parents (Jacoby, 1969; Russell, 1974).

It is important to note that while many researchers utilized a crisis framework in regards to the transition to parenthood and how it affected marriage, there are mentions of a need to help prepare individuals and couples for parenthood (LeMasters, 1969; Jacoby, 1969; Russell, 1974). Russell (1974) concisely stated that there is a “sequence of

developmental tasks a family goes through and that the more adequately the family completes prior tasks the better it will be able to handle a current transition” (p. 300). Moreover, as research moved away from the mode of parenthood as crisis, it became clear that there were more factors to be looked at to accurately ascertain why perceptions of how the stress of parenthood varies within individuals and marriages (Jacoby, 1969; Russell, 1974).

The Variability in Adjustment

Leaving the crisis framework behind does not change the reality that the transition to parenthood is still a major life event replete with significant changes (Belsky, et al., 1983; Kalmuss, Davidson, & Cushman, 1992; Perren, von Wyl, Burgin, Simoni & von Klitzing, 2005; Russell, 1974). During the movement away from the crisis perspective, Russell (1974) noted that a planned pregnancy conceived after marriage makes for a less stressful transition to parenthood. Moreover, results suggested that those who marry young and wait to have children make the transition more smoothly. Conversely, those who marry later in life and wait to have children experienced more negative effects in marriage (Russell, 1974).

According to Burr (1973), “the definition a family makes of the severity of changes in the family social system influence the family’s vulnerability to stress and this is a positive monotonic relationship” (p. 202). Building on that research, Harriman (1986) conducted a study and concluded that marriages with high levels of adjustment experience more positive effects of the transition to parenthood versus those with low

marital adjustment. The variable of “happiness in one’s marriage helps accentuate any positive changes and to minimize any negative changes occurring with the parenting experience” (Harriman, 1986, p. 237). The level of marital quality prior to the birth of the child can be a good predictor of how couples will experience the transition to parenthood (Belsky & Pensky, 1988; Wallace & Gotlib, 1990). However, those with generally well-functioning marriages prior to the birth of child still experience “modest but significant changes in the marital relationship which most would regard as somewhat unfavorable” (Belsky et al., 1983, p. 575). Shapiro et al. (2000) found that a good predictor for a decline in marital satisfaction occurs when a husband is negative toward his wife, shows he is disappointed in the marriage, and feels that their life is disordered.

Another variable associated with the transition to parenthood is the expectations of roles and responsibilities. The birth of a child brings about new and different tasks and divisions of labor. Cowan et al. (1985) stated that their “results suggest that increased gender differentiation accompanying the transition to parenthood is a factor in accounting for marital satisfaction decline” (p. 475). A few years later, Cowan and Cowan (1988) found that the more involved men were across the board in division of labor mattered to the wives’ satisfaction, yet had little effect on the men’s satisfaction. MacDermid, Huston, and McHale (1990) found that couples who hold sex-role attitudes that embrace a more egalitarian view on domestic roles and divide tasks accordingly reported higher levels of marital quality during the transition to parenthood. On the other hand, couples

found to be more at risk for difficulties are those with “traditional attitudes who take on nontraditional (more egalitarian) marital roles” (MacDermid et al., 1990, p. 485).

Another study found that problems arise when there are discrepant expectations for the amount of help. Of significance in this study is that the stress associated with discrepant expectations can lead to marital quality concerns which, in turn, can lead to a decrease in the quality of care for the newborn. The researchers note, however, that stress is not an easily measured variable (Fox, Bruce, & Combs-Orme, 2000).

An additional variable that is associated with the transition to parenthood is temperament. Belsky and Rovine (1990) found that a decline in marriage quality is associated with a difficult baby. Demo and Cox (2000) added that in turn, “the quality of marital adjustment appears to influence parenting practices and the development of the child” (p. 878). Therefore, if marital quality declines or is low, parenting behaviors tend to be more negative, thus negatively affecting the child. A prior study on infant temperament by Wilkie and Ames (1986) found that high levels of crying were more stressful on fathers and associated with higher levels of anxiety. Additionally, mothers tended to experience feelings of inadequacy. Later research supports that claim and further suggests that support and interventions in the transition to parenthood need to include fathers (Perren et al., 2005).

In regards to the nature of pregnancy, Belsky and Rovine (1990) mentioned a surprising result that, in regards to the planning of a pregnancy, unplanned pregnancies were associated with an improvement in marital quality. They explain that while that

seems counterintuitive, it appeared there is a benefit from the worry and anxiety that comes with an unplanned pregnancy in that the actual experience is usually better than expected. Later, Cox, Paley, Burchinal, and Payne (1999) suggested that unplanned pregnancies tended to be more stressful and marked by a decrease in marital quality; however, when combined with another variable, such as postpartum depression, it posed a greater risk factor. In regards to finances, the stress of feeling like there is not enough money for the addition to the family is an area that has not been reported much in the literature. The author contends that finances and the emotions surrounding money are an important variable regarding the transition to marriage and needs to be further studied.

Experiences of Mothers

One aspect of the transition to motherhood that has been receiving much attention in the media is post-partum depression. Most individuals are aware of the tragic situation in which Andrea Yates drowned her five children while experiencing post-partum depression or psychosis. Depression after the birth of a child is commonly discussed in baby and parenting magazines as well as popular books for new parents, such as *What to Expect the First Year* (Eisenberg et al, 1989). Postnatal depression exists on a continuum in which extremes like Andrea Yates are on one end and people who experience "baby blues" are on the other. Research indicated that approximately 25-50% of women will experience brief depressed moods and another 10-15% would be classified as post-partum depressed (Perren et al., 2005).

Post-partum depression has roots in both biological and sociological factors. Among other issues, mothers who have difficult infants, poor marital quality, lack of social support, and stressful life circumstances are at a higher risk for experiencing post-partum depression. Prior pathology further increases the risk for experiencing depressive symptoms (Cox et al, 1999; Perren et al., 2005).

It is important to note that research on the stability of attachment style has found that negative and stressful life events can lead to insecure attachment styles in infants. Additionally, securely attached children can transition to insecure attachment styles as adults when faced with situations such as post-partum depression and divorce. The correlation appeared to be that mother's experiencing post-partum depression interferes with responsiveness and availability, thereby affecting the quality of attachment (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1994; Waters, Weinfield, & Hamilton, 2000).

Another area of difficulty in the transition to parenthood for women is that of expectations. Kalmuss et al. (1992) found in their study of violated expectations that women with high expectations of help from their spouse and extended family that are not met will experience difficulty during the adjustment to motherhood. Furthermore, a subsequent study found that women who have expectations for helpfulness that exceed the father's expectations will report higher levels of concerns in regards to parenting (Fox et al, 2000). Of note, their research also found that:

There was clear differentiation in the arenas in which the fathers expected to participate and to provide assistance. The provider role continues to dominate

their expectations of 'helpfulness,' thus pointing to the continuing importance of the economic function to men's understanding of what it means to be a father.

(Fox et al., 2000, p. 128)

What remains clear is the need for clear communication, both on the part of the mother and father, as to what is expected of the other.

A final major variable for women making the transition to parenthood is the decision to return to work or stay home with their child. Further compounding this decision is the reality that "[c]urrently marriage with young children is incompatible with our nation's attitude toward the primacy of work" (Bradt, 1989, p. 253). Additionally, sometimes when parents seek flexibility in work schedules, it can result in negative outcomes for future advancement. Furthermore, several books have documented the way in which government policy, the tax code and corporate culture penalizes mothers who work and the parents who stay at home. Moreover, the authors ascertained that excellence in the workforce is pitted directly against excellence in care giving. They called for a restructuring of current family and work arrangements (Crittenden, 2001; Williams, 2000).

In regards to the home, while progress has been made in rebalancing home responsibilities between men and women, women still continue to be the primary caregiver, adding to the already stressful transition to parenthood. This is compounded by the reality that for a vast majority of middle class women, after taxes, insurance costs, and childcare expenses, her take home pay is minuscule. For mothers who opt to stay

home, many face the additional stress of financial hardship from unpaid family labor (Crittenden, 2001; Demo & Cox, 2000, Williams, 2000).

Experiences of Fathers

Demo and Cox (2000), in a decade review of families with young children, ascertained that the way in which men are changed by becoming a father and how those changes affect their families is lacking in research. Fortunately, the transition to fatherhood has more recently garnered an interest in the research world. An early study by Wenthe and Crockenberg (1976) explored the role of preparation in the transition to parenthood. Results showed that a lack of knowledge and training for fatherhood resulted in higher adjustment difficulties. Attending classes, interaction with other children through such means as babysitting, and reading books has been associated with higher levels of gratification for fathers (Wenthe & Crockenberg, 1976). Decades later, another study reported similar findings. Fox et al (2000) stated:

A notable pattern in the responses of fathers to this list of concerns was the number of fathers worried about their ability to perform adequately in the provider role—the ability to provide food, a place to live, safety, someone to care for the child, and general provisions. (p. 126)

It is also important for women to place confidence in the father to help with daily tasks such as diapering and bathing.

Another variable for fathers in the transition to parenthood is adjusting to changes in schedules. Infants bring with them unpredictability and a disruption of daily routines,

adding stress to marriage which can result in a decline in marital quality (Belsky & Rovine, 1990). The exhaustion and sleep deprivation inherent with the birth of a child is another factor affecting the transition to marriage. Further compounded by the exhaustion, women often experience a decrease in sex drive, which seems to have a more negative impact on father's transition than mothers. Bradt (1989) postulated that there is a "threat of too little time and too many levels of concern occupying the minds of both husband and wife for sexual intimacy to be achieved" (p. 242).

Deficiencies

There are other variables that have received little attention in the academic arena of research, such as finances and nature of the pregnancy. The stress of feeling like there is not enough money for the addition to the family is an area that has not been reported on much in the literature. The researcher contends that finances and the emotions surrounding money are an important variable regarding the transition to marriage and needs to be further studied. The nature of pregnancy takes into account factors such as planned or not planned, multiples, high risk issues, and effort spent trying to conceive, among other issues. Another area lacking in research is the emotional and social effects of the decision to stay home, although research exists on parents who both work. Stay at home moms are an arena in which the online community has stepped up to with respect to support and advice.

In regard to this particular study, the literature is deficient in studies addressing the effectiveness of the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* on marital satisfaction. To date

there has only been the one study by Shapiro and Gottman (2005) published as to the effectiveness of the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop*. As stated previously, interventions are needed to help couples facilitate a smoother transition and research in this area is sparse.

Conclusion

As the field of family sciences has evolved, so has our understanding and awareness of how the introduction of children affects the marital dyad. When research first began on this topic, the traditionally held belief was that movement into parenthood was perceived as a crisis. Over time, the focus shifted away from a framework of crisis to the exploration of the numerous variables in a “couples’ adjustment to parenthood and the factors associated with that variability” (Demo & Cox, 2000, p. 877).

This line of research is especially important to the field of family sciences as the impact on marriage spills over into the family. As Demo and Cox (2000) stated, “research in the past decade substantiates and clarifies earlier evidence indicating the importance of family relationships and resources for children’s development and well-being” (p. 888-889). One limitation is that while research into how men and women separately experience the transition to parenthood has gained interest, further research in those areas continues to be needed.

In conclusion, it appears that the initial shift to parenthood is almost always disruptive. The aforementioned stereotype of sleep deprived and overstressed parents that lends itself to marital negativity is usually true. People do manage to navigate the change

and few marriages deteriorate drastically based solely on the transition to parenthood.

While childbirth preparation classes are common (Hulbert, 2003), it is time, however, for an intervention or class designed to help marriages make the transition smoother. As Cowan and Cowan (1995) succinctly state, “programs to ease the transition to parenthood seem an obvious place to begin” (p. 422).

Summary

This chapter has been an exploration of the overall impact that the transition to parenthood has on marriage. Through the decades, research has focused on various aspects of how parenthood affects marriage. This chapter looked at the following major areas of research: 1) the “crisis” of parenthood, 2) the variability in adjustment, 3) experiences of Mothers, and 4) experiences of Fathers.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors. According to Rossman and Rallis (2003) a researcher utilized phenomenology to understand the meaning a person gives to their lived experiences. Seven certified instructors of the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* were interviewed. Each interview was audio taped, transcribed, and analyzed for common themes. This chapter presents the methodology of the research study. The sample population is identified, as well as the plan for protection of human subjects. The instrument is described along with the methods for collecting data and data analysis.

Protection of Human Subjects

To ensure the protection of participants in this study, the research was conducted according to the policies and procedures of Texas Woman's University's Institutional Review Board, (IRB). The study was presented to the IRB and all recommendations and changes made by the committee to ensure participant protection were put into practice. Approval of the study was obtained by both the IRB and Graduate School prior to data collection (Appendix A). Each participant who responded to the recruitment letter was informed of their rights, as well as given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at

any time. Participants were asked to sign a consent form that discussed the purpose of the study, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and confidentiality. The consent form also gave the researcher permission to audiotape interviews. A copy of the consent form is included in Appendix B. Participants were given a referral list to contact therapists in the event they felt the need to talk with someone further. Participants were provided with the opportunity to be contacted with the results of the study and contact information of the researcher was provided for any questions or concerns.

Sample

The target population for this study was certified instructors of the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop*. Additionally, a target population for this study was to be composed of married couples who have had a child in the past 2 years and had attended a BBHW; however, no couples were interviewed. In an effort to make the sample representative of the target population, purposive and convenience sampling of certified instructors was chosen. Recruitment for participants took place through certified instructors of the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop*. The researcher obtained contact information for certified BBHW instructors via the organization's website under the section titled, "Locate a BBH workshop."

Instructors were contacted via email (Appendix F) and follow up phone calls were placed asking if they would be interested in assisting the researcher to recruit participants by distributing the couple's recruitment letter, found in Appendix G, to previous workshop completers. Potential participants were given a recruitment letter and those

interested were asked to contact the researcher and then asked to sign voluntary consent forms (Appendix B) before interviews began. Instructors were not to be notified if any couples volunteered for the study. If a workshop instructor was planning an upcoming workshop, the researcher offered to advertise the upcoming workshop using the flyer, found in Appendix C, as a token of appreciation for their help distributing the recruitment letter upon workshop completion. No instructors asked for the flyers to be used in advertising. In addition, participants who would have agreed to be a part of the study were offered scholarships up to \$50 a couple towards the cost of the workshop. Workshop costs varied and were determined at the sole discretion of the workshop instructor, there is no set amount for couples to be charged.

Criteria for couples who would have been participants included the following:

1. Legally married heterosexual couples who are at least 18 years or older
2. Have experienced a first birth within the past 2 years of attending the BBHW
3. Voluntarily enrolled in the BBHW
4. Voluntarily willing to take part in the interview after completing the BBHW

Recruiting couples who had completed the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* was surprisingly difficult for varied reasons. For example, some certified instructors did have good records of prior attendance, contact information for previous attenders was not current, or instructors were too busy to take the time to send out the recruitment materials. Compounding those reasons was that instructors consistently found it difficult to recruit couples themselves to attend the workshop. In the end, two couples contacted

the researcher to be interviewed. Multiple attempts to schedule interviews were made; however, ultimately no couples were interviewed.

Certified workshop instructors were also asked in the recruitment letter if they would be interested in being interviewed regarding their experience with the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop*. Twenty-six certified workshop instructors were contacted by phone and then with follow up emails asking if they would be willing to take part in the study. Instructors were then asked if they were able to take part in an audio-taped phone interview discussing their experience with the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop*. Twelve instructors responded to the researcher's request and while eight of them expressed a willingness to take part in the study, only seven interviews were completed with the certified instructors at a mutually convenient date and time.

Collection of Data

Patton (2002) discussed that when doing qualitative research, the instrument being used is the researcher and the quality of and credibility of methodology depends upon the way the researcher conducts fieldwork. Furthermore, a benefit to qualitative research is the ability to look in depth and with great detail at issues. With that in mind, the researcher made every effort to communicate a respectful attitude, a neutral stance, and to suspend any biases throughout the course of the interviews. The researcher additionally tried to foster an atmosphere in which participants felt comfortable speaking freely (Patton, 2002).

Once an interview date and time was scheduled, the researcher emailed participants a copy of the demographic survey and consent forms. Signed and completed forms were received prior to conducting the interview. The researcher and participant each kept a copy of the consent form. Demographic information such as the age of participants, geographic location, education, ethnicity, employment, and income level was collected to describe the sample for the purpose of generalizability. A copy of the demographic questions can be found in Appendix D.

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were used to collect the qualitative data from certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors who volunteered to take part in the study. Phone or Skype interview times were arranged at a mutually convenient date and time. Reminder emails were sent the day before the scheduled interview. Several appointment times needed to be rescheduled due to unforeseen events on the part of the participants. The researcher conducted the interviews using open-ended questions during a phone interview or a Skype video call. Privacy was ensured. Interviews were digitally recorded to ensure accuracy of responses. Notes were also taken during the interview process. Upon completion of the interview, participants were thanked for their time and reminded they could contact the researcher if they had concerns, questions, or wanted a summary of the results of the study. The following interview questions were used as necessary to gently guide the conversation and can also be found in Appendix E:

Bringing Baby Home Workshop Questions for Instructors

1. Tell me about how you came to be a certified instructor for the BBHW.

2. Tell me about what things you think are most helpful for couples in the BBHW.
3. What needs to be emphasized more or less in the workshop?
4. What do you think could be added to the workshop that would be helpful?
5. How did you find the recruiting process and marketing of the workshop to be?

Analysis of the Data

The purpose of this research study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors. A qualitative phenomenological approach was utilized as a framework for this study. The researcher digitally recorded and transcribed each completed interview. Subsequently, each interview was listened to again while reading the transcription to check for accuracy. Audio files and transcriptions were stored digitally using NVivo 10. A back-up copy of digital files was stored on a password protected computer. Any additional email correspondences to schedule interviews or explain the research in more detail were printed then deleted. Hard copies of the emails were kept in a locked file at the researcher's residence.

The computer software, NVivo 10 was also used to facilitate thematic coding. NVivo allows the user to code by themes, make changes in data organization, and create clusters of content categories (Richards, 1999). Inductive content analysis guided the researcher and themes were allowed to emerge from the data. The researcher read through each transcription numerous times and as thematic statements emerged, a grouping node was created for each one. In NVivo, a node is named and created in the

software as an initial way to begin to organize data references that relate to the node. A node is like a digital container that stores the references to the emerging themes (Richards, 1999). To allow the narratives of each participant to provide voice to each identified theme, the sections of the transcriptions that pertained to each emerging theme were copied to the node. Quotes from the interview transcript that fit the node title were highlighted and assigned to the node or nodes. When a node was opened, all the references assigned to it are in one place and appear on the screen in one file. As the transcripts were read through numerous times, numerous nodes were created and coding to the nodes occurred until the primary themes were identified. Nodes were then merged, renamed, and organized into the primary themes and subsequent sub themes that were identified.

As qualitative research is inherently subjective, Marshall and Rossman (1999) suggested measuring the trustworthiness of qualitative research by evaluating credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. This study sought to enhance credibility through the use of thick descriptions and triangulation. The researcher used rich, thick descriptions by allowing the participant quotes to support emerging themes and to make results more transferable.

Triangulation is a method of cross checking data by studying it from multiple standpoints (Creswell, 2003). To facilitate triangulation, two colleagues were asked to read through the transcriptions and subsequently found themes similar to the researcher. The researcher narrowed down and merged the various themes the external coders

identified with the nodes created in NVivo, resulting in three themes and several sub themes. After discussing the themes with the colleagues and finding them in agreement, the final three themes and sub themes were felt to be an accurate assessment of the data.

Three themes emerged as the major themes of this study: 1. The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* is helpful for couples; 2. The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* is difficult to execute; and 3. The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* has value for practitioners. Theme 1 had the following sub themes: 1. Content of the workshop is helpful; 2. Group dynamics enhanced the workshop experience; and 3. The workshop helps to normalize the experience of transitioning to parenthood. Theme 3 had the following sub themes: 1. The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* is difficult to market; 2. There is a lack of support from the Gottman institute; and 3. The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* required a lot of work for little return.

Each theme and sub theme utilized the rich descriptions from the participants to support credibility of the themes. To increase dependability, the researcher was aware from the onset of potential biases that could have an impact on interpretations and approaches to this study. The researcher was aware of and could sympathize with the frustrations the instructors commented on regarding recruiting couples to take the workshop due to personal frustrations with not being able to recruit couples to participate in this study. Thus, to increase dependability, the researcher made a pointed effort to not use language that agreed with the instructor's frustration nor ask leading questions to encourage discussions about those frustrations.

Finally, this study attempted to maintain confirmability by allowing data to be tracked to the original sources of audiotape and transcriptions. Peer reviews, triangulation, and external coding teams were also used to ensure authenticity and objectivity of the results.

Summary

This chapter presented an overview of the methodology the researcher used to conduct this study. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors. This purpose was accomplished by interviewing certified workshop instructors about their experiences and perceptions. Qualitative data was gathered from seven participants who were certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors. In-depth interviews were conducted with each participant and all necessary precautions were taken to ensure protection of human participants. Interviews were digitally audio recorded, subsequently transcribed, coded, and analyzed for themes.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors. The researcher interviewed 7 certified workshop instructors who volunteered for the study. Interviews were digitally audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for recurring themes. This chapter presents the results of the data analysis conducted on the interviews. The sample of participants is described in the first section. Next, the themes that emerged from the interviews are described in detail.

Description of Participants

The researcher interviewed 7 participants who had completed training at the Gottman Institute and are certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors. The cost for participants to become certified workshop instructors is around \$600 and does not include any travel, lodging, and meal expenses. The majority of instructors interviewed were female; one was male. In regards to race, 6 participants identified as Caucasian; one declined to answer.

Participants were all located in the United States; two of those interviewed lived in the Seattle, WA area, near the Gottman Institute. The remaining five participants came from major metropolitan cities across the United States. Participants ranged in age from

35 to 64 years, with 52 being the median age. The mean age of instructors was 51.4 with a standard deviation of 11.3. Table 1 illustrates the mean, standard deviation, and median ages of the study participants.

Table 1
Means, Medians, and Standard Deviations for Ages of Certified Bringing Baby Home Workshop Instructors

	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max
Age	50.6	10.32	52	35	64

All participants had a master’s degree or higher. Of the seven interviewed, two had earned a doctorate; the remaining five had earned master’s degrees. In addition to all being certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors, all participants were some sort of licensed or certified mental health practitioner who maintained a private practice. Three of the instructors indicated they were employed part time, three worked full time, and one instructor answered other: self employed. One instructor declined to answer the question regarding annual income range; the remaining participants all stated their income level was over \$75,000. Table 2 lists the education level, employment status, licensure, and annual income range.

Table 2

Frequencies and Percentages of Income Level, Employment Status, Licensure, and Annual Income Range

	n	%
Highest Education Level		
Bachelor's	0	0%
Master's	5	71%
Doctorate	2	29%
Employment Status		
Full Time	3	43%
Part Time	3	43%
Other	1	14%
Licensure		
Clinical Psychologist	2	29%
LCSW	1	14%
LMFT	1	14%
LMHC	2	29%
Certified Family Life Educator	1	14%
Annual Income Range		
\$45-59,999	0	0%
\$60-74,999	0	0%
Over \$75,000	6	86%

The certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors had varying levels of success in recruiting couples to attend workshops offered and four instructors are no longer investing resources into promoting or leading workshops. Some instructors have redirected efforts to teaching shorter, condensed versions of the workshops they market as seminars. Table 3 lists how many full workshops and how many shorter seminars each instructor has facilitated.

Table 3

Workshops and Shorter Seminars Facilitated by Each Instructor

Instructor	Full Workshops	Shorter Seminars	Comments
1	2	10	No longer marketing or leading BBHW
2	0	0	2 couples initially signed up, had to cancel due to low enrollment; no longer marketing or leading BBHW
3	6	0	At a counseling center that offers the BBHW multiple times a year, she alternates teaching the BBHW with another instructor
4	1	5	No longer marketing or leading BBHW
5	0	0	No longer marketing or leading BBHW
6	6	0	Able to regularly fill workshops, but is not interested in leading the BBHW as his partner is and plans to be more of a guest speaker at the workshop in the future
7	0	14	Currently markets and runs mini BBHW seminars on a regular basis. Will do the workshop for only 1 couple if the situation warrants.

Findings

After analyzing the interviews from the certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors, three primary themes emerged. The first theme is The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* is helpful for couples. The second theme is The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* is difficult to execute. Finally, the third theme is The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* has value for practitioners.

The Bringing Baby Home Workshop is Helpful for Couples

Each instructor had different experiences with what lead them to become a certified workshop instructor, how many workshops they had led, and with recruitment of participant couples. However, one unifying theme all instructors voiced was that they believed the workshop to be tremendously helpful for couples who are transitioning to parenthood. Consistently instructors said things such as, “I think the main thing is, again I think there’s inherent value in the program” (Participant 2) and “I think the workshop is pretty well researched and it’s pretty well done” (Participant 3). Participant 1 stated that the couples, “most of them felt that it was great; they loved the material” and Participant 4 echoed that saying, “everyone loved it; everyone thought the workshop was extremely valuable, very helpful.” Additional comments included Participant 5’s belief that the “material is great” and “in the full workshop, it’s just chock full [of information]” and Participant 7 said “I think it's excellent, there's nothing better. It's the greatest. Um, and I think it's really profound information.” Participant 6 agreed, asserting “I think, you know,

a lot of the stuff in the workshop is really great information.” Another instructor elaborated on the numerous benefits of the workshop:

I think the, the time that the couples spend with each other during the workshop because the way the WS works, um you alternate between kind of video lecture group activity and then the couples going off by themselves and doing um activities and they, just as a couple. And I think those, that particular component is probably the most meaningful because they get an opportunity to privately kind of discuss what are some conflict areas in your relationship, you know um, we kind of talk about something and then send them off to kind of do it. And I think their ability to process together as a couple by themselves is really useful in kind of assimilating the material, you know into their own life. Because that can be kind of private and not something you might want to share with the whole group but it allows them to do that. And we also focus on them planning. Like one of the activities they do is to plan how they’re going to connect with each other after the baby’s born and the stress reducing conversation like daily or weekly stress reducing conversation. So it allows them to, to go and plan what they’re gonna do after the baby. (Participant 3)

In addition to the overarching theme that the BBHW is helpful for couples, three sub themes emerged as to exactly what is helpful for couples. First, instructors noted that the content of the workshop is helpful. Second, instructors indicated that group dynamics

enhanced the workshop experience. Finally, instructors voiced that the workshop helps to normalize the experiences of transitioning to parenthood.

Content of the workshop is helpful. The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* is a 12-hour psycho-communicative workshop that is divided into numerous sections, usually covered over a course of 2 days, see Appendix H for a detailed list of what is discussed. The certified instructors mentioned a number of aspects of the workshop that they believed to be helpful for couples. Participant 2 mentioned that while she had never led a workshop, she believed the following about the workshop materials:

I think that couples often in the early stages of a relationship, they don't anticipate that marital satisfaction um following the birth of a child is going to decrease.

And there's strong evidence that it will for up to two years following the birth of a child and um so, one, to anticipate that and, two, to be able to know what you can do to reduce, um, that, that decline, or even eliminate that decline in marital satisfaction, I think is, is a tremendous benefit of the program. And I do think that um, for couples who don't have um any kind of formal training in how to manage conflict and how to accept influence, um and how to anticipate how their changing roles are going to change the dynamic of their, their particular relationships. (Participant 2)

Another instructor remarked that couples:

...get education not only about their marriage, but about the psychological development of their baby. So, I think it's the first time that they might really, in

any sort of focused way, um have it driven home how intimately related both of those processes are, you know. (Participant 1)

Participant 1 also noted that “a strength of *Bringing Baby Home* is that the materials are attractive in a cute sort of happy, whimsical way” and many indicated the videos and exercises to be significant pieces of the workshop. One instructor said “I like the exercises; I like the exercises that are in there, um and people really like them so I, I would keep it” (Participant 4). In regards to exercises, a workshop instructor explained the things that she would have used if she had led a workshop:

...you know there are handouts, um and a little booklet that is given with each um segment and there are also some activity cards that the couple take where um there's one there they, it's almost like the Newlywed Game, where they take turns um answering questions about each other and seeing...you know they may think they know their partner very well, but they realize that they there still is much to learn about each other. Um, so I think there are a lot of things like that that are very useful and hands on, and acceptable, and kind of fun for couples. (Participant 2)

Participant 5 believed that “there are some gems in his [John Gottman's] videos” and she especially liked the videos *What's Baby Saying?* and *Let's Play with Baby* and would have definitely used them had she led a workshop. Another instructor agreed “the *What's Baby Saying?* for some people, that video is really, um impactful” (Participant 6). It was also mentioned that Gottman:

...shows this film in there like *What's Baby Saying* or like paying attention to the baby's cues. Like I thought that stuff was fantastic. Um or sometimes in some of the stuff around the babies, uh he's got that film like *Let's Play with Baby*, I thought was wonderful. And I think I bought some of those as like a supplement, so I had all of it. (Participant 4)

Answering a question on what she thinks would have been helpful for couples, participant 2 explained that:

It's, it's very much a workshop. So, so there are there some wonderful, powerful videos. There's one that's on, Gottman presents um educating parents about being able to read their baby's emotional signals and a little bit about kinda becoming emotional coaches, learning to understand...so it's a little bit of early child development education. And so that's one of the videos, but there are also, there's some humor introduced, there's some very funny segments about father's roles, um there's some uh times where you break up into groups and um you uh...I mean when you break out with just your partner and you go and practice some communication exercises um where the partners might sit down and list together some, some like values and goals they have or some rituals that they would like to introduce into their family life. (Participant 2)

Another content area of the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* that was frequently mentioned as helpful for couples was the component on fathers. Participant 1 discussed how the topic is introduced by John Gottman on a video and that she felt like "men can

hear that [the importance of fathers] more readily from a man.” Additionally, an instructor stated:

One component that I particularly like is the component where we talk, we do a whole um, section on father’s and father’s contributions to the baby and then they talk, they have a set of cards, um I’m assuming your familiar with the workshop but they get a set of cards and the father looks through the cards and picks out you know three things he really wants to do with the baby that he wants to kind of be his thing with the baby and then they talk about how they’re going to make that happen. And judging from the research that I’ve seen, that contribution of dad is so important that I like that the workshop has them specifically plan that. You know what’s dad gonna do; I really like that. (Participant 3)

Another instructor mentioned several things in addition to the section on fathers:

... when they talk about the emotional bids: turning towards, turning away, turning against. They really uh seem to enjoy learning that concept. And also, um, included in that is the exercise about expressing your needs, um they find that they uh um really need to work on that a little bit more. So I think that um decks, um decks of cards are really tremendous um and I think especially for men, they really, really um I think that, that's um, they enjoy that, that part of it. Besides showing some of the videos, besides discussing, I think they really enjoy um, they tell me that the deck of cards, and then I also liked um to split it up, I think it’s helpful just to have the different forms of the delivery, you know like interactive

exercises and bringing them back for discussions. Um and you know, sometimes they can, men feel like they're out in Seattle seeing Dr. Gottman and Dr. Julie Gottman by the DVDs. Especially the one about learning about the baby's signs. I think those are the highlights. (Participant 7)

Participant 2 made an interesting point regarding fathers and family members.

...especially in the component that identifies the importance of the father's role, one of the segments is um really strengthening the father's role and ends up as a dad, I think that there's a bonding opportunity there for men who rarely get to talk about these things the way women do, um that I think um it's invaluable. And uh I think um identifying the need to make men feel um integral um not to be shut out by aunts and sisters and sister-in-laws, and grandmothers, um to make them feel what their unique relationship with their child is really important and to valued by their partners. (Participant 2)

Finally, another area that almost every certified instructor commented on was the section on conflict regulation. Participant 1 stated that in regards to what is helpful for couples, "conflict regulation skills, and um, which hold them in good stead throughout their marriage. It's really good for them to learn about that at that stage." Participant 6 indicated that a majority of the workshop should be spent on conflict regulation for couples, mentioning that "when we get to the effective conflict regulation section of the workshop, people seem to get more uh, engaged and um people have told me that they wish we had spent maybe half the workshop just on effective conflict regulation" and

then when talking about it couples are “like finally, I have some tools to deal with some of the issues that um plague our relationship repeatedly.” Another instructor agreed that couples find the conflict resolution section to be a favorite among couples who attended the workshop.

I think that the parts of the workshop that seem to be most helpful for the couples that I’ve worked with are the parts on conflict resolution. Figuring out how to negotiate um, you know those areas of conflict in your marriage and the couples that have, because we do a review every time we do the workshop we have feed back from the couples, they also seem to find the part of the workshop helpful where they um do love mapping and they find out, assuming new things about each other. That seems to be one of the favorite parts of the workshop for couples.

(Participant 3)

She added that “[w]e talk about self soothing and we talk about ways they can calm down, ...how if you get into a conflict, learning to take a break from each other and then once you take your break how do you calm down individually” (Participant 3). Finally, Participant 4 mentioned that along with the conflict regulation section, there are several other sections she finds helpful for couples participating in the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop*.

And then the regulating conflict, constructive problem solving, and um the intimacy and romance in a relationship, that stuff I thought was great. Oh and this um this fondness and admiration system, a lot of times I use this um with clients,

this worksheet that he has in here, the fondness and admiration worksheet, it has a word list and you pick out things that you know, you admire in your partner because I think this is where a lot of people get into trouble, they don't share, they don't share appreciation, they don't share acknowledgement, they don't share their admiration for each other and um, builds a lot of resentment, so I, I try to use that one quite a bit too. (Participant 4)

Group dynamics enhanced the workshop experience. Several of the certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors also indicated that having couples go through the workshop in a group setting added to the overall experience. Participant 2 mentioned that while the workshop was not designed as a support group, she believed that had she led a workshop that “the fact that it’s provided in a workshop setting, um, helps people feel supported, and feel less um alone with the particular challenges they are facing.” A different instructor pointed out that “it’s helpful for them [couples] to be going through a workshop with other couples who are at the same stage of the family life cycle that they are” (Participant 1). Another instructor commented that in a group setting, “it just makes you to, um, open up to each other and uh it seems like they have instant camaraderie because they're all either expecting or a little bit in different stages” (Participant 7). Participant 6 noted that a group is “beneficial in that you can reach out to a lot of people, uh, at one time” providing them with important information about things that help a relationship to work.

A few of the instructors elaborated on how the group dynamics is helpful for couples. One instructor indicated that:

I think people really appreciate the sharing, um in the group setting and they love kinda hearing from each other and they actually build a certain amount of intimacy. I mean the topics we're talking about are pretty private and um and I think, you know, they like my style, since I do this for a living, is very engaging and nonjudgmental and open and you know I share a lot of examples about my own life um, so that people feel like I'm not an expert and like I don't know anything about what they're talking about. And I feel like that puts people at ease too, um just kinda reminds them that, hey we're all in this together. Um, but people like the sharing back and forth um, and just the different perspectives on how people see it or kinda getting them to open up to something they didn't think about. (Participant 4)

Additionally, an instructor pointed out how each group can be different, which lends itself to various dynamics. She stated:

It really does make a difference and I really have had a lot of different, like you say, each group has its own kind of feel and its own kind of dynamic to it. You have groups who are really talkative and really interactive with each other in the big group. And then you have couples who are very quiet and kinda to themselves and don't talk a lot in the big group....I do think that the groups that are, that end up being kinda interactive with each other as a group and kinda forming

relationships, I think they get maybe a little bit more out of the group because they do tend to share, you know, some of their anxieties, some of their fears. When they hear that from other couples, it's kinda nice for them to kinda commiserate with each other and, or be excited for each other about certain things or whatever. Uh, it's nice when the groups kinda coalesces like that and we've even had some groups who have formed relationships where they've decided to get together after the workshop is over. Which is kinda cool... we also have couples who take this workshop who've already had their baby um and those couples tend to be really good to have in the group because they can kinda already say oh my gosh this is so helpful you know because once the baby comes this is so hard or once the baby comes this is so hard. And they kinda give that perspective to the couples who are still expecting that this is really useful. The information, this is helpful. (Participant 3)

The workshop helps to normalize the experiences of transitioning to parenthood. A final sub theme of the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* is helpful for couples is that it seems to normalize the experiences couples will have as they transition to parents. Participant 1 pointed out that “hearing about the research is helpful to them. They find out what’s realistic to expect” and that “when they go through it, they don’t immediately think something’s wrong with them.” Moreover, participant 4 maintained that when couples hear the information in the workshop “they love it and they feel like,

you know, oh god there's hope!" An instructor elaborated on the idea that the workshop normalized experiences for new parents.

I think just preparing, the idea of preparing couples for that, so that when it happens their not quite so rattled by it. You know couples have reported to me later that thinking back on the workshop it helped them not to worry about their relationship because after the baby they're arguing, they're more tense, they're tired and so instead of questioning oh my gosh is there something wrong with us, they were able to look back at the workshop and go oh, you know this is to be expected, this is kinda part of the deal. And so I think that's really helpful for couples to know that. (Participant 3)

Participant 2 summed up nicely how the workshop could help normalize the various things new parents experience.

Um, I think one of the most helpful things is um helping couples who are really focusing on you know, fairy tale story of what becoming parents, um will be like. It's really helping to bring awareness to them of some of the challenges and normalizing those challenges. So that um, they really do have a much better sense than couples who wouldn't go to the workshop, actually what they anticipate in terms of their takeaway, in terms of time management, in terms of sleep deprivation, in terms of added stress and in terms of shifting roles. (Participant 2)

She also noted how the workshop would have addressed “things like post partum depression, um psychosis and I think that, that is very useful for partners to know and um, know what the risks are and what the symptoms are” (Participant 2).

The Bringing Baby Home Workshop is Difficult to Execute

While the certified instructors were in agreement that the material presented in the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* was valuable for couples who are transitioning to parenthood, a number of them expressed varying amounts of frustration with the execution of the workshop. Specifically, instructors noted three areas of difficulty: the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* is difficult to market, there is a lack of support from the Gottman Institute, and finally that the *Bringing Baby Home* requires a lot of work and effort for little return.

The Bringing Baby Home Workshop is difficult to market. Participant 1 stated very bluntly that she “think[s] the biggest problem with the workshop is the difficulty marketing it.” She described how she went through churches, hospitals, and doctor offices and had an incredibly difficult time getting couples to sign up for the workshop. When she was networking with other certified instructors she went through training with, she discussed that “someone in our class started emailing everyone else about what a hard time they were having marketing. So there was a whole entourage of people like myself who were having a hard time marketing” (Participant 1). Based on her overall frustrations with the execution of the workshop, she stated that “2 years ago, um I decided that I

didn't want to market the *Bringing Baby Home* anymore. I was just sort of fed up with the whole thing" (Participant 1).

Participant 2 echoed those feelings in regards to promoting the workshop, saying "I found the whole process to be rather frustrating." Additionally, she reported that she "cut my loss and it's very discouraging because I think there's a lot of value to the program" (Participant 2). She also had reached out to local hospitals and ob/gyn offices with little to no interest from couples. In regards to why it is difficult to market, she offered the following thoughts:

I think one of the concerns that couples have articulated is that it's a, it's a very lengthy WS and I uh think if I had a primary criticism, I think I have two. I think part of what made it difficult to promote and engage couples is one, the time commitment that it requires and I think that it could conceivably be reduced to a one day program rather than requiring 12 hours, possibly squeezing it into 6 hours, maybe 8. I think some of the components are less essential. (Participant 2)

Furthermore, participant 2 noted that she lives on the east coast and there is no real name recognition with the program the further you get away from Seattle. Participant 1 pointed out the same thing mentioning that "[y]ou are marketing an unknown entity and, at least in my situation, I was the first one in [my area]." Interestingly, 2 of the instructors interviewed for this study live in the Seattle area and they were the only ones who did not indicate the workshop was difficult to market. Participant 6, who lived in the Seattle area,

did note that couples complained about the cost of the workshop, but did not relate any marketing problems.

Participant 4 also mentioned that other instructors she was in contact with were finding it difficult to market too. She felt “like how to make it sustainable, how to get interest in your community, that stuff uh, uh was really hard” (Participant 4). Participant 5 echoed what other instructors said in discussing her process of and frustration with trying to market the workshop.

Well, I'll talk to you about that in terms of trying to get a full workshop going. And um I actually tried doing this with a colleague who had been in the training with me ... and um we did a lot of marketing. We put together flyers, brochures, we sent them to all the mental health people in the county, um we sent them, we sent them also to ob/gyns though we didn't go visit ob/gyns, we didn't go visit uh nurse practitioners or you know, doula people like that. We did send the material out, I think I did visit one doctors office, you know we did a little bit of those kinds of things. Um, we also had an article in uh in uh a local news weekly, a full, a full cover article about *Bringing Baby Home*. Um I was one local, very small uh radio show. And all that marketing, we got one couple signed up and that couple was the, um the daughter and son in law of a friend of mine. You know, it's like it was ridiculous. So, I don't know what to say, you've got people saying oh what a great idea and I'd love, I'd love for my kids to do that, or you know, people should do that. But we didn't get any people. (Participant 4)

Participant 7 reported similar issues with marketing and recruiting:

I think when we had been certified and we all came back to um our various um locations where we work, it was uh extremely challenging just to recruit. Um and um, you know, even with some of my colleagues up in NY, we talked about how we could do it. There was a uh like a Yahoo group that was started by someone in NY just to keep each other going because we were struggling to recruit and so then, you know, we were all getting discouraged so I finally just kept asking, you know, if we could do something different rather than having the whole workshop, if I could just do seminars because uh the time frame was uh too long and I wasn't Dr. Gottman and I wasn't Dr. Julie. Um we ended up doing it, I ended up doing it much shorter and just doing it as seminars, uh so that still is challenging to recruit and I don't think the word is out there as much as it could be...it's been a real struggle. (Participant 7)

There is a Lack of Support from the Gottman Institute. Another area of difficulty with executing the workshop stemmed from a feeling that there was a lack of support from the Gottman Institute. The 4 certified instructors who lived outside the Seattle, Washington area expressed frustration with the things they were told the Gottman Institute would do to support their efforts to market the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* versus what really happened, or rather did not happen. One instructor explained that:

There was going to be a lot of promotion through the media nationally, he was going to be on the Today Show, GMA, blah blah blah. And the uh, support staff

was going to be available to BBH educators with marketing material, marketing ideas, sort of coaching...the educators on marketing. And none of that really happened. (Participant 1)

Another instructor mentioned the same issue, stating that:

I forgot all this but I remember I was, it was upsetting at the time. There was a lot of buzz about how much they were going to do, John Gottman in particular or he and his folks at the at the, the folks at *Bringing Baby Home*, there was a lot of buzz about how much they were going to do to publicize this and there were a couple of occasions where it, oh we're going to be big news, there's going to be some big event or spread, it's going to hit the news and then it's gonna be...and it never happened. So, you know, I really did go through the training hearing that there was going to be institutional support uh and publicity that didn't happen. (Participant 5)

One instructor pointed out that:

I hear other criticisms, um, and I share it myself, of like the Gottman's, like if Gottman needs to be spending more time on that stuff. And there needs to be some segment of that and um maybe some commitment uh about, like I'm telling you, the one article he wrote, I don't know if that was a year and half ago or something in the Washington uh Times, it was like BOOM people are emailing me, they want to know about BBH, like just seeing the impact of like one article...(Participant 4)

Another instructor suggested that The Gottman Institute needs to have a “top down” marketing strategy, “rather than the underlings doing the work” (Participant 7). She discussed the impact on her business when The Gottman Institute would promote the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop*:

I think I had some success when either Dr. Gottman, Julie Gottman or John Gottman goes on, you know writes a book and then that triggers a lot of feedback into the website, the national website, or he's appeared on TV, or a radio show, on NPR or GMA, I did get many calls, I think I got about seven calls, when there was an article in the WSJ, I think in like April of last year, 2011, and it was called, the headline said, "So Cute, So Hard on a Marriage" and that really had mentioned two organizations that were doing um something similar like the BBH program. So that, that, when they'd see that then they would call me from the national website. Um, so that's where I'm getting most of the business from.... maybe if they would start their own little campaign to promote it. Uh and even anything connected with Dr. Gottman, if they could promote him, it always seeps back down into the *Bringing Baby Home* program; it has somewhat of an impact. But just for them to um, get on the bandwagon and say, you know, there are all these people across the world that are certified, um, many might be successful that are in the hospitals, but those of us who aren't, um why aren't you on board and uh push to have that as a component in the hospitals, rather than just the childbirth education. (Participant 7)

Participant 2 also noted that in the past, she had spoken with other certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors and they reported “very similar experiences to mine and actually we, we um voiced some of our concerns at one point to um at this point it’s the Gottman Institute. Um didn’t get a lot of you know, results from that.” She speculated that recently there were some changes taking place at the Gottman Institute.

Well, there was uh the sense that things were on hold, that there was reorganization happening, which was about a year ago. Um and that, I mean I, I think one of the things, again I don’t want to come down too hard on um the Gottman Institute but I, I was rather appalled to discover the uh website for BBH was taken down and that if you called the number on the website, actually part of it the website being taken down, if you called the number about a year ago, um there was no response. Um and so it took my digging to find out that actually like the RRI and BBH had been temporarily shut down. Um that then it was going to be incorporated back into the Gottman Institute but the BBH instructors were not notified of this in advance and I found that really inexcusable. (Participant 2)

The instructor went on to note that:

Now I think that is um, another down side, I thought, was after we got trained, I don’t know how long, I don’t know if it was a year after, 2, 3, I don’t know. But you know, John Gottman put together tapes; I’ve heard that there are tapes that you can buy. Well if people can buy a tape and listen to it, why would they want to go to a workshop? And he wrote a book, *And Baby Makes Three* is the name of

the book, has all the pertinent information in it. Well, [if] people can buy a book why would they want to go to the workshop? Average person doesn't realize that there's added value to going to the workshop. So I think they're sort of sabotaging...the marketing success of the educators, certified educators, by doing that. And now, maybe they started out with really altruistic motives and maybe he really thought he was going to get on Oprah and thought he was going to get on, you know...and that fell through. I know that those things happen. (Participant 2)

She said that the lack of support and previously mentioned issues "soured my experience with the whole thing" (Participant 2).

She summed up her experience with the workshop with these thoughts:

I think there's inherent value in the program and I just think it's profoundly disappointing that I feel it's kind of been like uh an abandoned child or baby itself. But I don't feel that there's, I don't know that there's anyone really motivated in promoting it right now...um within the Gottman Institute and I don't, I don't think their offering additional trainings as far as I know. I think it's basically been kind of put off to the side and I think it's a loss because there was potential there and I wish I understood better what happened. (Participant 2)

The Bringing Baby Home Workshop required a lot of work for little return.

In terms of the workshop being difficult to execute, a final sub theme instructors

consistently discussed was that the time and effort involved in putting on a workshop was not worth it. Participant 1 explained that:

The reason that was a turn off to me was because again you have to buy those [workbooks] and I feel like I've invested so much financially to going to the workshop [training] and you have to have the materials for the people when they come before they pay to go, you have to have it there. I just decided I'm not doing that I'm not spending more money on it. (Participant 1)

When discussing preparing to put on a workshop, participant 4 stated, "Oh my god, so much work, so much fucking work!" and that she will not likely run the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* anymore in the future. She explained that:

I just can't, like sustain it and the amount of work it took me to even like run one workshop was enormous and I thought, and you're not getting paid for any of that stuff either, so and I ran it at like a deep, deep discount. I think I was charging people one hundred dollars, (laughs), so even like for me, yeah per couple, so it was like I was really slashing prices so people would come cause they don't know about it either, um, and you know, so in the end it felt like whoa I got, I got paid so very little for so much work. (Participant 4)

Participant 6, who regularly could fill workshops, also felt like there was not enough return on investment to justify continuing to run the *Bringing Baby Home*. The instructor noted that:

...honestly, it's, it's not something where you can make, it's more, make, make very much money. It's kinda a public service thing, it's not really something that you can...and it takes a lot of time. It's uh a two day workshop, 12 hour workshop, so it just takes a tremendous amount of time and the, the pay is not that great for spending that much time...preparing for it, finding a space to host it...if you calculate what we're taking, what we're making for 12 hours of our time, plus preparation time on top of that, and the cost of um just we provide some um snacks and coffee, tea and stuff like that, it's really just not that much money.

(Participant 6)

Furthermore, other instructors expressed parallel frustrations. Participant 5 made the comment that “[i]t was not, certainly not worth the time and money I’ve put into trying to put on a workshop, it did not get me anything” as she was unsuccessful in generating enough interest to led a workshop. She added that she doesn’t “mess with it anymore, it’s done, it’s finished. I really got frustrated with it and it was a lot of work for nothing, basically” (Participant 5). Participant 7 noted that “the majority of people aren’t, that I was certified with in my small group, um all dropped it because they didn’t have the energy to keep the marketing going.” Another instructor stated:

I cut my loss and it’s very discouraging because I think there’s a lot of value to the program, but I think, again, I think it could be uh the meatiness of it could be culled and it made leaner so that...I think that when people hear 12 hours, it’s overwhelming. Um, I know that there are uh people who provide these

workshops, I don't know what places do it for, you know, a minimal fee. I think it's like subsidized by the hospital, I don't know how much the presenters make, but when I hear that people are doing a 12 hour workshop and charging something like \$70 a couple, I just don't understand the business model for that. (Participant 2)

The Bringing Baby Home Workshop has Value for Practitioners

A final theme is that the workshop is valuable for practitioners, even amid their frustrations with the execution of the workshop. Almost all of the instructors noted that in some form or another, their training to become certified instructors was worth it. They also indicated that in some way or another, the material is being used, primarily in their private practices. For example, participant 2 indicated that “when I work with couples, um, who are transitioning into that phase [parenthood], um that I'm more conscious of some of the challenges and have more tools to offer them” and that she has “worked with couples on a private basis using, not doing the formal official workshop, but using some of the information and tools from it.” Participant 7 discussed that as a parent educator, she “definitely incorporate[s], you know, the emotion coaching um that I learned and you know many of the principles of the BBH” and believed the training was “definitely worth it.”

Furthermore, participant 2 noted that:

I will say that's been the most positive thing about it for me. I can never say I wasted the money because I've integrated so much of what I've learned into my

marital sessions um that it, just it's totally worth that. Now I could have, I could have learned the same information just by studying one of Gottman's books or whatever but would I have really done that and would I have really integrated it in the same way, I don't think. I think that's really been valuable and another value of it is I've integrated it more into my marriage. (Participant 2)

Along the same lines, participant 3 commented that the training absolutely was worth her time and:

It's been a really fun thing to do um and definitely I've learned a lot about helping couples and I do individuals and families couples therapy as well and I think the concepts from the training, from the notebook from, you know, doing the training, do very well in helping me with individual and couples work as well. I often bring the concepts from, particularly the conflict resolution stuff and all that into my couples work as well. And Gottman's done work, you know, on all that as well, how to work with couples who are not necessarily new parents too. So it, it translates really well for couples in general, you know, even who aren't having a baby come home. (Participant 3)

Participant 4 emphatically believed the training and the knowledge she gained were very valuable. She felt like it was great, fantastic material, even if all a person does is use it with clients. She stated that she "use[s] it all the time in my private practice" (Participant 4). She added that "it was worth it, it was absolutely worth it" and that

it's so valuable um and I greatly appreciated you know the stuff that I got and that I kinda relearned, um and when I was there I got fired up more about or you know how to uh just use this stuff in my everyday practice. Um, you know and that was extremely helpful. So, you know, it was valuable to me, it's something that I'm glad I did, I'm glad I invested in it. (Participant 4)

Participant 5 also stressed that the workshop training and material is valuable and useful not only in private practice, but also in other areas. She discussed utilizing the videos when training interns, teaching family therapy, as well as using them at times as demonstrations for couples in therapy. Moreover, she reported that she was “glad I have the material, you know, I really value the training” even though she is no longer trying to lead workshops. She further explained that:

I use the material, I love the material in working with couples, um either couples who are in that family formation phase or even couples who've had their kids a bit longer, their kids might be in elementary school, um I can still talk about, talking about what's normal and the normal stresses and strains and some of the normal emotional changes people go through and some of the mistakes and some of the kinda bad directions they can go in. Um I use that material a lot and it helps people. You know they really say, wow that makes, you know it just helps people to normalize what's normal and then also to be thinking about alternative ways for them to handle things. (Participant 5)

Summary

This chapter described the results of this qualitative phenomenological study that explored the experiences and perceptions of certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors. The sample of certified workshop instructors was described utilizing demographic information. Three primary themes emerged through the data analysis; two of the primary themes had additional sub themes. The first theme is The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* is helpful for couples, with the following sub themes: the content of the workshop is helpful, group dynamics enhanced the workshop experience, and the workshop helps to normalize the experience of transitioning to parenthood. The second theme is The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* is difficult to execute, with the following sub themes: the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* is difficult to market, there is a lack of support from The Gottman Institute, and the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* requires a lot of work and effort for little return. Finally, the third theme is The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* has value for practitioners. These themes were described in more detail along with supporting quotations taken from the semi-structured in depth interviews with each participant.

CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, REFLECTIONS, LIMITATIONS,
IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this research study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors. A phenomenological, qualitative framework guided the researcher throughout the sampling methods, data collection, and data analysis. Seven certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors shared their stories about their experiences with the workshop. Each instructor was asked four basic questions with additional follow up and clarifying questions as needed. Questions are listed in Appendix E. The semi structured in-depth interviews were then transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The researcher then read the transcribed interviews multiple times and used NVivo 10 software to facilitate thematic coding, organize and store the data, as well as to create clusters of content categories. This chapter presents a discussion of the findings and how they relate to the literature on the transition to parenthood. Then, conclusions and limitations of the study will be addressed. Additionally, reflections from the researcher and implications for the field are discussed. Finally, future recommendations for research are suggested.

Discussion

This study explored the perceptions and experiences of certified instructors of the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* using a qualitative approach. While there have been

numerous studies through the years that indicate a decline in marital satisfaction after couples transition to parenthood (Belsky & Rovine, 1990; Cowan & Cowan, 1988; Harriman, 1986; Jacoby, 1969; LeMasters, 1957; Russell, 1974; Shapiro et al., 2000), there have been few preventive interventions designed to help couples navigate problem areas and issues that arise as they become new parents. Duvall and Kerckhoff (1958) wisely stated decades ago that:

There is no stage of the family life cycle when family members do not need some explicit education for what to expect, how to meet current requirements, fill their roles, and achieve their developmental tasks, both as individuals and as whole families. (p. 337)

The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* was created to help fill the gap in which there are few programs designed to help maintain or increase marital satisfaction as they transition to parenthood (Shapiro & Gottman, 2005). Seven certified instructors of the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* were interviewed about their experiences with the workshop. There is a scarcity of literature on the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop*, and no studies have looked at the instructors of the workshop, thus the researcher added to the body of literature by identifying the themes found in this study. The following is a discussion of how the results of this study contrast or support the literature regarding the transition to parenthood and the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop*.

Marital Satisfaction Decline

The transition to parenthood is a transitional moment in the family life cycle that has unique challenges and stresses (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; Craig & Dunn, 2007). Bradt (1989) stated that “there is no stage that brings about more profound change or challenges to the nuclear family than the addition of a new child to the family system” (p. 235). Early research labeled the transition to parenthood as a crisis and discussed how “roles have to be reassigned, status positions shifted, values reoriented, and needs met through new channels” (LeMasters, 1957, p. 352). Later studies moved away from the crisis framework, but research continued to indicate that the transition to parenthood is a stressful time and negatively impacts the marital dyad (Jacoby, 1969; Kalmuss et al. 1992; Perren et al., 2005; Russell, 1974).

The results of this study support the shift away from the crisis perspective as well as the research that indicated the transition to parenthood is a difficult time. While the perspective of the couples is missing from this study, the instructors talked about how couples do not always anticipate that marital satisfaction will decline. Thus, a benefit of the workshop is to help them anticipate and be prepared for how to deal with marital quality decline. Other instructors pointed to some of the exercises that are designed to reduce the stressors that arise after the baby comes home.

Additionally, studies indicated that the marital quality prior to the transition to parenthood is a fairly good indicator of marital quality after the transition (Belsky & Pensky, 1988; Harriman, 1986; Wallace & Gotlib, 1990). The results of this study

demonstrate that couples who attend the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* are given tools to help them reduce the decline “or even eliminate that decline in marital satisfaction” (Participant 2) such as effective conflict regulation. The certified workshop instructors discussed how learning the effective conflict regulation skills “hold them [couples] in good stead throughout their marriage” (Participant 1) and gives them the ability to manage issues that repeatedly plague their relationships (Participant 6). The various skills and tools learned throughout the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* can help to increase marital satisfaction prior to the birth of the baby and thus, as research indicated, (Belsky & Pensky, 1988; Harriman, 1986; Wallace & Gotlib, 1990) the couples should be able to maintain that higher level of satisfaction post baby.

Baby Brings Changes

Changing roles and expectations. In regards to the changing roles, research indicated that interventions during the transition to parenthood should include things specific for fathers (Perren et al., 2005). Also, Wilkie and Ames (1986) found that father’s experienced higher levels of stress and anxiety when an infant has high levels of crying. They also discussed that there were feelings of inadequacy expressed by mothers. The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* supported the studies noting that fathers need to be included in interventions. The workshop includes a section with a video of Dr. Gottman discussing fathers and then there are exercises for fathers. The video stresses the importance of father’s roles in the new baby’s life and instructors believed that being presented by Dr. Gottman allowed men to hear it “more readily from a man” (Participant

1). Activities for fathers include things like using cards to pick out several things he wants to do to help with the baby and how they are going to make that happen. Being able to have discussions with other fathers about what their role will be also appeared to be helpful (Participant 2 and Participant 3). Fox et al (2000) found in their study that discrepant expectations and an increase in stress, marital quality can be negatively impacted and subsequently led to a decrease in newborn quality care. Additionally, research noted that the more egalitarian parents are in regard to dividing tasks and roles, the higher the level of marital satisfaction throughout the transition to parenthood (MacDermid et al., 1990). Studies also discussed that violated expectations can make the transition to parenthood more difficult for mothers. Research unmistakably indicated a need for clear communication between mothers and fathers of their needs and expectations (Fox, et al, 2000; Kalmuss et al., 1992).

The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* activities and exercises on roles and moreover, the discussions about expectations and how the father is going to help with the baby firmly support the aforementioned studies on roles and expectations. Furthermore, those interventions and skills learned at the workshop can help to decrease stress that comes with unmet, unexpressed, or discrepant expectations for help. Instructors mentioned that couples would sometimes report back to them later that rather than questioning if something was wrong with them because they were so tense and stressed, they would remember what they learned at the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* and know “this is kinda part of the deal” and not be “quite so rattled by it” (Participant 3). Another

noted that the workshop takes away the fairy tale story of parenthood and helps to give couples an awareness of what new parents should expect and arm them with tools to anticipate and handle stress, conflicts, and issues (Participant 2).

Changes in emotions, time, and priorities. Research also brought to light how post partum depression, sleep deprivation, decreases in intimacy, and scheduling changes can negatively affect marital satisfaction during the transition to parenthood. New parents holding or preparing to hold their little bundles of joy were unprepared for just how exhausted they would be, how severely sleep deprivation would affect their marriage, and for the reality that post partum depression is a threat for them, not just other people (Belsky & Rovine, 1990; Bradt, 1989; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1994; Perren et al., 2005; Waters, Hamilton, & Weinfield, 2000; Waters et al., 2000). The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* not only educates couples about these topics, but takes things a step further by providing tools and resources for couples to better handle these situations. Instructors mentioned how couples would want to “glaze over um the post partum depression and feel like, not me” (Participant 4) and that the workshop gives couples information on what the symptoms and risks are for the “baby blues” (Participant 2 and Participant 7).

The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors also talked some about how couples who have not had their babies yet tend to dismiss how severe the sleep deprivation and exhaustion will be. They added that in workshops with couples who have already had the baby, the new parents can validate the workshop material and help expectant parents get a better idea of how unprepared they really are (Participant 2 and

Participant 7). Participant 2 also talked a little about how the workshop helps new parents with time management and prioritizing tasks. Additionally, instructors discussed the importance of normalizing the experience of transitioning to parenthood. Sometimes, just discussing and hearing from another person how priorities, time, and emotions change with a new baby helped couples to feel a sense of hope and give them realistic expectations for what bringing the baby home will be like (Participants 3 and 4). Participant 5 also emphasized that the workshop helps to normalize the emotional changes new parents go through and helps them think about alternative ways of handling the stress that arises from these changes. Another instructor discussed the importance of teaching the concept of emotional bids and expressing needs (Participant 7). These concepts taught in the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* are directly correlated with the research that demonstrated new parents need to be familiar with these changes and how they affect marital quality.

Workshop evaluation

There has been scarce research on the effects of the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* and this study does add to the literature regarding the effectiveness of the workshop. Shapiro and Gottman (2005) created the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* to address and educate couples who are transitioning to parenthood about the various issues that arise, what to expect after bringing home baby, and to teach them skills in conflict resolution and intimacy. Their study found that the workshop had a positive effect on marital satisfaction and quality. By definition, the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* was

created to facilitate a smooth and positive transition to parenthood for new and expectant couples (Shapiro & Gottman, 2005). All of the instructors indicated that they believed the workshop is effective in helping couples have a more positive experience becoming parents, supporting Shapiro and Gottman's (2005) study.

Criticism of the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop*

There have been criticisms of the workshop however. Cowan, Cowan, and Knox (2010) pointed out that the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* is geared primarily for middle-class married couples, leaving out low-income couples and not addressing stresses that lower income couples experience, such as unemployment and housing issues. Furthermore, the workshop also does not explore support systems that lower income couples can tap into, like friends, government, or extended families, which can help reduce the negative effects of these stressors (Cowan et al., 2010). Gottman et al. (2009) discussed how they are using their research that helped develop the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* to adapt a program for lower income couples.

Participant 1 made a similar point that Cowan et al. (2010) made in that the workshop, being geared specifically for married couples, leaves out other populations, such as same-sex couples and lower income couples. Participant 2 also noted that she felt like the workshop was a little too focused on heterosexual couples. Instructor 5 found herself surprised that she was unable to recruit couples as she lived in an affluent area and felt like the people in her area were exactly who the workshop was targeting, middle to upper middle class married couples who were expecting their first child. These

observations made by the instructors supported the observations made by Cowan et al. (2010). The researcher also noted that the workshop leaves out adoptive parents.

Another criticism of the workshop not found in the literature but articulated by every instructor interviewed living outside the Seattle, WA area was how difficult they found the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* to execute. Instructors were critical of The Gottman Institute for not following through on interviews, articles, and advertising for the workshop. Participant 7 commented that the marketing should have a top down approach and felt, along with others, that if The Gottman Institute would reach out to hospitals and doctors and encourage them get on board with the workshop, then the instructors would not have experienced the current difficulties with recruiting so many instructors spoke about.

In summary, it is clear that the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* addresses the various issues that previous research studies point to as reasons for the decline in marital satisfaction during the transition to parenthood. The material presented, videos shown, and activities done by the couples at the workshop help to prevent and/or prepare couples for marital decline in areas such as expectations, role changes, conflict regulation, and father's roles. Additionally, the workshop covers topics to help normalize and create realistic expectations for new parents by discussing post partum depression, sleep deprivation, and intimacy concerns. Finally, there are a few criticisms of the workshop concerning marketing and recruiting issues and the limitations of the population targeted by the workshop. Overall, the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* seems to be a beneficial

educational program for married couples who want to have a smoother, more positive transition to parenthood.

Conclusions

A phenomenological framework was a driving methodology for this study in order to give the lived experiences of the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* certified instructors a personal voice (Creswell, 2003; Gubrium & Holstein, 1993; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; Rossman & Ralliss, 2003). The researcher's original intent was to study what effect, if any, does the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* have on couples as they make the transition to parenthood? Unfortunately, no couples were able to be recruited for this study. The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors. The following research questions guided the interviews with instructors:

1. What, if anything, from the workshop is helpful for couples as they make the transition to parenthood?
2. What was their experience with training and implementing the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop*?
3. What, if anything, from the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* is valuable for the instructors for continuing education in their field?

While each instructor had different experiences with the teaching and recruiting process of the workshop, through the qualitative method of analyzing the seven interviews, three distinctive themes emerged. The themes are as follows: 1. The *Bringing Baby Home*

Workshop is helpful for couples, 2. The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* is difficult to execute, and 3. The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* has value for practitioners. These three themes brought unity to the individual stories.

All certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors indicated that the material presented in the workshop is well researched and presented in an engaging and impactful way. Several instructors also mentioned that couples often underestimated the impact of transitioning to parenthood and how much marital satisfaction can decline after the birth of a child. The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* helps couples to anticipate and impact that decline, as well as offer tools and resources to help couples know how to handle things during the transition to parenthood. In addition to the developmental aspects of the baby taught by more traditional childbirth preparation classes, the workshop adds the component of also educating couples about their marriage.

The instructors also discussed a number of pieces of the workshop that are helpful, such as videos, exercises, and activities. Specifically, the instructors mentioned things such as effective conflict regulation, the “What’s Baby Saying” and “Let’s Play with Baby” videos, the importance of father’s and their roles, expressing needs, and the emotional bids. The instructors added that couples really seemed to benefit from being able to watch and learn about the components and then have time to practice what they have learned with guidance and the ability to ask questions.

Another aspect of the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* is that the workshop style lends itself to positive benefits for couples. The group setting of the workshop allowed

couples to experience a level of intimacy with people who are going through the same family life cycle stage. For example, instructors indicated that couples felt supported and less alone when going through the workshop with other couples. Participant 1, 3, and 4 specifically discussed how being with other couples offered hope and helped couples to keep from feeling like something is wrong with them. Additionally, couples taking the workshop who had already experienced the birth of their child were able to add personal experiences to the workshop content, which expectant couples found to be helpful.

Moreover, the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* helps to normalize experiences and emotions couples have as they transition to parents. Instructors discussed how exposure to the material and exercises helps prepare couples for the various issues that will arise and that when they do arise, couples will not be so distressed by them. Also, instructors mentioned that the workshop information helps couples to be more realistic about their expectations, to have hope, and to not feel like there is something wrong with them when tension and conflict inevitably happen. The workshop also covers topics such as post partum depression, sleep deprivation, added stress, and managing shifting roles, which helps new parents normalize and better manage their experiences with becoming parents.

Besides commenting on how fantastic the content of the workshop is, most of the instructors discussed being frustrated with the actual execution of the workshop. All the instructors who lived outside the Seattle, WA area commented on the difficulties they had marketing the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop*. Instructors talked at length about how

frustrated and discouraged they felt with repeated efforts to reach out to hospitals, ob/gyn's, and various other marketing efforts, with little to no results. Several instructors ended up never being able to recruit enough couples to even lead one workshop; others ended up adapting the materials into shorter seminars without officially calling them *Bringing Baby Home Workshops*.

Moreover, the certified workshop instructors felt a lack of support from The Gottman Institute. These instructors suggested that marketing should come first from The Gottman Institute through national interviews, journal articles, and radio or television promotions. The instructors also felt let down because they believed The Gottman Institute had made promises regarding marketing materials, support, and publications and there was no follow through. Some instructors discussed that even if the marketing and support issues changed in the near future, they were so burned by the whole experience they will not be doing any *Bringing Baby Home Workshops* anymore.

Another area of frustration with the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors discussed was how the workshop required a large amount of time, effort, and financial investment to put on the workshop with very little return on investment. The initial invest cost of becoming a certified BBHW instructor was around \$600 and many instructors also incurred additional expenses related to travel, meals, lodging, and transportation. They talked about how you do not get paid for the time spent preparing for the workshop, securing space, and providing any refreshments. Additionally, the instructors have to purchase the workbook and workshop materials before couples pay for the workshop.

Furthermore, instructors only charged between \$150 to \$200 a couple for a 12 hour workshop and they felt like the amount of money they made from each workshop was not sustainable.

The *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* certified instructors did indicate that while there were frustrations with the execution of the workshop, they felt like their time spent in the training was valuable. Numerous instructors discussed that they use the materials with clients in their private practice or when training interns. Another instructor mentioned that she used what she learned when teaching family therapy classes. They also talked about how much the material has helped them in their own marriages and that the things they learned in the training extended beyond being useful for only parents who are transitioning to parenthood.

In general, instructors seemed to find that the workshop material and training to be very valuable and worth their time and money invested into the training. Instructors commented on several key aspects of the workshop that are important tools for couples who are or have recently transitioned to parenthood and how the workshop helps to normalize experiences for them as well. While there were a number of frustrations with the overall execution of the workshop, there were no doubts the instructors found the material to be significantly important and valuable for couples bringing home their first baby.

Reflections

Patton (2002) talked about how in qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument. In an effort to enhance interpretation and understanding of the results of this study, the researcher offers her reflections. The impetus for the transition to parenthood topic began when I experienced my own transition to parenthood seven years ago. Over the next few years, I began to study the topic in depth and started writing the first drafts of my literature review. Throughout my dissertation process, I too had trouble recruiting couples for my study; much like instructors had trouble recruiting couples to the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop*. During interviews with the certified instructors, I felt I could relate to their frustrations and had to continually be aware of those feelings and bracket them. I made great efforts to shelve any assumptions or preconceived notions about the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* and recruiting experiences during my interviews. I also distinctly got the impression that most of the instructors were glad to have someone finally listen to their story and also to find an outlet for their frustrations about the execution of the workshop.

Furthermore, I listened to the stories each instructor told without predetermined opinions and allowed the results to emerge from their narratives. To increase reliability and authenticity of the data and results, two individuals familiar with research protocols reviewed the transcripts and helped to triangulate the themes. While attempting to recruit couples who had taken the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* was arduous for the researcher, shifting the focus to the certified instructors and hearing their experiences

with the workshop resulted in very pleasing results. I truly hope that more professionals in the mental health field learn about the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* and can help get the information out to couples who are transitioning to parenthood.

Limitations

Although this study added to the scarce literature on the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* and offered important information on the workshop and the instructor's experiences with it, there are several limitations specific to this study. First, the study utilized convenience and purposive sampling, not random selection. Additionally, there was a limited sample size; however, there are also a limited number of certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors. Another limitation of this study is that no couples were interviewed for this study to add their perspective as to the actual effectiveness of the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop*. Thus, the sample limits the ability to generalize the results found to the larger population. Also, using semi-structured in depth interviews to collect data is a limitation. Finally, while a phenomenological framework is a good fit for qualitative research, the self reporting of lived experiences in place of more objective, statistical data means that the findings are not easily quantifiable.

Implications

Those in the mental health field who work with couples may be aware of some of the difficulties that arise during a couple's transition to parenthood; however, it is not likely common knowledge that programs such as the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* exist. This study highlighted how the workshop prepares and equips expectant and new

parents to have a smoother, more pleasant experience making the transition to parents.

The following are implications for professionals in the mental health field:

1. Acknowledge that the transition to parenthood is a stressful time in a couple's relationship.
2. Assist couples in normalizing their experiences and stressors rather than minimalizing it.
3. Recognize the need for preventive educational tools, such as the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop*, to help sustain marital quality or prevent the decline of marital satisfaction after couples have their baby.
4. Be familiar with interventions, exercises, and strategies for assisting couples who are currently in the transition to parenthood stage.
5. Teach conflict regulation skills and healthy relationship skills to couples at any stage of the life cycle to facilitate increased relationship quality.
6. Consider doing group therapy for couples who are transitioning to parenthood so they can support each other during this stage.
7. Become familiar with certified *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructors in your area to be able to recommend upcoming workshops to expectant or new couples.
8. Churches and other religious organizations could provide the *BBHW* to their congregations and local community at a reduced fee or for no cost.

9. Consider promoting or other ways of supporting the *BBHW* for local certified instructors.
10. Consider partnering with local *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* certified instructors; for example, using each other as referrals, sharing space for workshops, and advertising for each other.
11. Consider taking the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* instructor training to fulfill your CEU requirements and to be better equipped to work with couples in this stage or even to lead the actual workshop.

Recommendations for Future Research

Even though this study added to the body of literature regarding the transition to parenthood and the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop*, additional research would add to the scarcity of literature on the workshop itself and better equip mental health professionals working with couples in this stage of the life cycle. The following are suggestions for research in the future:

1. Repeat this study using a larger sample size.
2. Repeat this study using a sample that includes BBHW instructors outside the US.
3. Conduct a qualitative study of couples who have taken the BBHW.
4. Conduct a quantitative study of couples who have taken the BBHW using pre and post tests.
5. Conduct a mixed methods study of couples who have taken the BBHW.

6. Conduct a study of the BBHW using qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods that includes members of The Gottman Institute in the sample.
7. Conduct a longitudinal study of BBHW couples using qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods with measurements taken before the workshop, after the workshop, and a year after the baby was born.
8. Conduct a study using qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods study that compares couples who have taken the BBHW with couples who have not participated in some kind of parenting education program.

Summary

This chapter presented a discussion of the study's findings and conclusions about the results compared to what literature had previously found. Then, the researcher presented her personal reflections on the study and limitations of the research conducted. Finally, implications for the field were discussed and recommendations for future research were provided. The results of this qualitative study indicated the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* is indeed helpful for couples who are making the transition to parenthood. The workshop helped to normalize what new parents experience, such as sleep deprivation, increased stress and conflict, feelings of depression. Furthermore, the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* offered tools and strategies for dealing with changing roles and expectations, effectively managing conflict, and strengthening the parent child relationship through the use of videos, activities, and exercises. While most of the instructors did express dissatisfaction with the overall execution of the workshop, they

did find that the workshop materials, content, and training to be very valuable and worth their time.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

IRB Approval Letter



Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619
940-898-3378 FAX 940-898-4416
e-mail: IRB@twu.edu

March 14, 2012

Ms. Elizabeth Speights
8868 Fayetteville Drive
Ft. Worth, TX 76244

Dear Ms. Speights:

Re: *The Transition to Parenthood: A Qualitative Study Exploring the Effect of Bringing Baby Home Workshop on Marital Satisfaction (Protocol #: 16958)*

The above referenced study has been reviewed by the TWU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and appears to meet our requirements for the protection of individuals' rights.

If applicable, agency approval letters must be submitted to the IRB upon receipt PRIOR to any data collection at that agency. A copy of the approved consent form with the IRB approval stamp and a copy of the annual/final report are enclosed. Please use the consent form with the most recent approval date stamp when obtaining consent from your participants. The signed consent forms and final report must be filed with the Institutional Review Board at the completion of the study.

This approval is valid one year from March 14, 2012. Any modifications to this study must be submitted for review to the IRB using the Modification Request Form. Additionally, the IRB must be notified immediately of any unanticipated incidents. If you have any questions, please contact the TWU IRB.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kathy DeOrnellas, Chair
Institutional Review Board - Denton

enc.

cc. Dr. Larry LeFlore, Department of Family Sciences
Dr. Glen Jennings, Department of Family Sciences
Graduate School

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: The Transition to Parenthood: A Qualitative Study Exploring the Effect of the Bringing Baby Home Workshop on Marriage

Investigator: Elizabeth S. Speights, M.MFT 817-929-8229, elispeights@gmail.com
Advisor: Glen Jennings, Ed.D. 940-898-2695, gjennings@mail.twu.edu

Purpose:

You are being asked to participate in a research study being conducted by Ms. Elizabeth S. Speights, M.MFT. as a part of the requirement for a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Family Therapy at Texas Woman's University in Denton, TX. The purpose of this research study is to understand how, if at all, the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* was helpful and how it might have helped couples navigate the transition to parenthood.

Participation:

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and anonymous. Also, you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. If you choose to participate in the in-depth interview, a date and time will be made at your convenience and preferred location or done via video conference. 60-90 minutes will need to be set aside to complete the interview. Survey questions will include some basic information about yourself and then cover questions about your experience with the workshop. Interviews will only be audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher for data analysis.

Potential Risks/ Confidentiality:

A possible risk to you as a result of this study is a loss of confidential information. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that the law allows. In an effort to reduce this risk participants will be assigned alphanumeric codes, such A1 and A2, B1 and B2, and so on. Identifying information, such as names and contact information will be stored separately from interview transcriptions and consent forms.

Another potential risk may include fatigue and/or boredom due to the length of the interviews. Completing this study may take 60-90 minutes, although less time is likely. Participants may stop participating at any time. The researcher will plan to use a relaxed environment, offer breaks if needed, and will inform you that some questions may seem

Participant's initials

repetitive. If you experience physical or emotional distress regarding the interview questions, you may stop at any time. The following links are to lists of counselors and/or clinics that you are welcome to use if you feel as though you need to discuss this distress with a professional: www.aamft.org, www.apa.org, and www.socialworkers.org.

The researcher will try to prevent any problems that might occur because of this study. Please let the researcher know of any problems and she will help you. Please note however that TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might happen because you are taking part in this research.

Benefits:

A benefit of this study is the opportunity to contribute to a better understanding of how the transition to parenthood affects marriages. Additionally, you can choose to receive a summary of the results of this study by sending a request via email to elispeights@gmail.com.

Questions:

If you have any questions not covered, the researcher will be more than happy to respond. Please know that you can ask questions before, during, and after participating. Phone numbers and email addresses of the researcher and advisor are located at the top of this form. Any questions about your rights as a participant of this research or concerns about the way this study has been conducted should be directed to the Texas Woman's University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 940-898-3378 or via e-mail at IRB@twu.edu.

Informed Consent:

Your signature below constitutes your informed consent to be a participant of this study and your agreement to have interviews audio recorded. A copy of this form will be provided to you.

Signature of participant

Date

APPENDIX C

Recruitment Flyer

BRINGING BABY HOME

Are you a new parent interested in techniques for keeping your marriage strong as you transition to parenthood?

Join us in [date] for the exciting Bringing Baby Home Workshop! This two day workshop will help facilitate a positive and smooth transition for new and expectant parents.

Partial scholarships will be available for legally married couples over the age of eighteen and who have had a first child in the past 2 years and who agree to sit for an interview after completion of the workshop.

Please contact a certified Bringing Baby Workshop instructor listed below:

APPENDIX D

Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your age (at last birthday)? _____
2. What is your gender? ___Female ___Male
3. How would you categorize your race? _____
4. What is the highest level of education you have received?
___ High School ___ Bachelor's ___ Master's ___ Doctorate
5. What city do you reside in? _____
6. What is your current combined annual income range?
___ under \$15,000 ___ \$15,000-\$29,999 ___ \$30,000-\$44,999
___ \$45,000-\$59,000 ___ \$60,000-\$74,999 ___ Over \$75,000
7. What is your current employment status?
___ Employed full-time ___ Employed part-time ___ Student
___ Stay at home mother ___ Other: _____

APPENDIX E

Bringing Baby Home Workshop Questionnaire

Bringing Baby Home Workshop Questionnaire for Instructors

6. Tell me about what things you think are most helpful for couples in the BBHW.
7. What needs to be emphasized more or less in the workshop?
8. What do you think could be added to the workshop that would be helpful?
9. How did you find the recruiting process and marketing of the workshop to be?

APPENDIX F

Instructor Recruitment Letter

Dear *Bringing Baby Home* Certified Instructor,

As an instructor for the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop*, you are well aware of the great potential of this innovative program for new parents. This is my interest too. As a doctoral candidate at Texas Woman's University, I am conducting my dissertation research to better understand how the workshop has helped marriages and am asking for your assistance in letting parents who have completed your workshop know about the opportunity to participate in this study. If you are interested, I'm asking that you pass on the included letter to workshop participants who have completed the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop*.

In the event you are scheduling an upcoming workshop, I'm also willing to help recruit people to attend the workshop by distributing a flyer with dates, times, and contact information. I'm also willing to offer up to \$50 per couple in scholarships for participants who agree to take part in my study. I will be happy to do this as a token of my appreciation for your help in distributing the recruitment letter upon workshop completion.

Married couples, over 18, who have attended the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* in the past 2 years, are eligible to participate in the study. Both spouses will be asked to take part in a 60-90 minutes in-depth interview with the researcher. If participants are located in the DFW area, interviews can take place at the location of their choice or via video conference. If participants are not local, interviews will be completed utilizing video conferencing. I'll send a summary of the study results to all who are interested. Of course, participation is completely voluntary and very much appreciated.

Furthermore, I'm also interested in speaking with you as a certified instructor about your experience with the materials and the running of the workshop. If you are interested in taking part in a 30-60 minute interview with the researcher that will be audio recorded, please contact me to schedule a time. I would greatly appreciate your voluntary participation!

I'm eager to answer your questions about my research and hope you'll contact me for details. You may also contact my Research Director, Glen Jennings, Ed.D., if you wish at GJennings@twu.edu or 940-898-2695. Please note that there is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, and internet transactions.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth S. Speights, M.MFT
Doctoral Candidate
Texas Woman's University
elispeights@gmail.com
817-929-8229

APPENDIX G

Parent Recruitment Letter

Dear Parents,

Congratulations on your participation in the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop* as you embarked on the exciting journey of parenthood! As a doctoral candidate at Texas Woman's University, I'd like to invite you to be a part of my research that seeks to better understand any effect this innovative program has on the marriages of couples participating in this workshop.

If you are married, over 18, and have completed the workshop in the past 2 years, you may participate in my study. The study involves participating in an in-depth interview with the researcher. The interviews will last approximately 60-90 minutes. If you are located in the DFW metroplex, the interviews can be conducted at the location of your choosing or completed via video conferencing. If you are located outside of the DFW metroplex, interviews will be completed using video conferencing. Video conferencing will be completed using the Skype platform. Skype is a free and readily available video conferencing tool that offers a video or audio only option; all you need is a computer and a webcam. The researcher will provide a Skype contact name via email or phone for you to call using the Skype service at the prearranged date and time. The interview will be audio recorded using a call recorder software. If you like, I'll be glad to share with you the results of the study when it's completed.

Of course, participation in this research is completely voluntary and very much appreciated. I'm glad to answer any questions you and your spouse may have about participating in the study. You can reach me by email or phone as shown below. I look forward to hearing from you soon and congratulations on your new addition! Please note that there is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, and internet transactions.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth S. Speights, M.MFT
Doctoral Candidate
Texas Woman's University
elispeights@gmail.com
817-929-8229

You may also contact my Research Director,
Glen Jennings, Ed.D. at 940-898-2695 or
GJennings@twu.edu

APPENDIX H

Topics Covered in the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop*

Topics Covered in the *Bringing Baby Home Workshop*

Exercise 1: The Emotional Communication Game

Exercise 2: Knowing Each Other's Inner Worlds: Creating Love Maps

Exercise 3: Making Love Maps for Everyday Life Together; Creating Rituals of
Connection

Exercise 4: Creating Meaningful Rituals of Emotional Connection

Exercise 5: Building the Fondness and Admiration System

Exercise 6: Creating a Culture of Appreciation in Your Family

Exercise 7: Turning Toward One Another Instead of Away: Building the Emotional Bank
Account

Exercise 8: The Daily Stress-Reducing Conversation: Deposits to Your Emotional Bank
Account

Exercise 9: Physiological Self-Soothing: Flooding and Self-Soothing and Taking Breaks

Exercise 10: Develop a Break Ritual for Flooding: Problem Solving in 4 Steps

Exercise 11: Step One: Soften Your Startup

Exercise 12: Who Does What in the Marriage—Anticipate and Negotiate; Step Two:
Repair Interaction and De-Escalate Conflict

Exercise 13: Step Three: Repair and De-Escalate—Formalizing the Repair Process—The
Repair Checklist

Exercise 14: Step Four: Compromise and Accept Influence: The Art of Compromise;
Fighting in Front of Babies and Children—What the Research Concludes

Exercise 15: Honoring Mothers and Fathers: Fishbowl About the Emotional Transition
for Each Gender

Exercise 16: Building More Rituals of Emotional Connection, How Can Dads Stay
Involved with Their Kids? Preserving Sex and Romance in the Marriage:
Step One: Building More Rituals of Emotional Connections; Step Two: Is
There Sex After Kids? The Big “Yes Buts” About Scheduling Sex, The Big
“Yes Buts” About Romantic Dates; Plan Your Romance

Exercise 17: Lecture and Discussion: What Do You Need to Know About Your Baby?
Your Baby’s Psychological Development: Milestones

Exercise 18: Building Shared Values

There were lectures, demonstrations, role plays, and videotapes on the following topics: (a) the basic questions—What is the transition to parenthood like? What are the warning signs of marital meltdown? What can be done to avoid meltdown? How can dads stay involved with their kids? What do we need to know about our baby? Fundamental conclusion about the transition: emotional communication is important; (b) understanding marital communication: the sound relationship house theory; (c) maintaining friendship, romance, and passion—love maps, fondness, and admiration; bids for emotional connection; and turning toward one another; (d) positive sentiment override instead of negative; (e) conflict management and regulation in solvable and perpetual problems; (f) physiological self-soothing during conflict; (g) knowing and honoring your partner’s life dreams—and the philosophical transformations of the transition to parenthood; (h)

building and maintaining a shared meaning system; and (i) interacting with new babies -
[using video]. (Shapiro & Gottman, 2005, p. 7-8)