Marital Stability Among Quaker Couples

Author: Jennifer Schmoll Rapkin

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MARITAL STABILITY AMONG QUAKER COUPLES

a dissertation

by

JENNIFER SCHMOLL RAPKIN

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate variables contributing to stability in the long-term marriages of members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). A qualitative approach was used to facilitate understanding of the dynamic and complex nature of a long-term marriage. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 Quaker couples from Eastern Massachusetts. Participants were volunteers who had been married for at least 20 years, and whose youngest child was at least 18 years old. In addition, participants had been members of the Religious Society of Friends or attenders at Quaker meeting for at least 20 years. The interviews addressed a range of factors from the early years of marriage, middle years, and the current period. Additional questions were added concerning the impact of Quakerism on the individual and the marriage.

Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed. Interviews were then independently scored and coded for significant themes by the researcher and a male counterpart. Interrater reliability was calculated based on the percentage of items upon which both raters agreed. This method produced interrater reliability of .89. HyperRESEARCH software (1991) was used to organize and analyze the interview data.

Ten themes emerged from the data. The first theme was premarital variables which included initial attraction and certainty about spouse prior to marriage. Relationship themes were gender equity, communication, conflict, roles, relatedness, decision making, intimacy, and satisfaction with the relationship. The final theme involved the influence of external factors upon the marriage. Changes over time were also discussed. Religion and culture were discussed in light of the ten major themes. The relationship between these findings and the literature on marital quality and stability were provided. Suggestions for psychotherapy and for further research were identified.
Chapter 1

Introduction

Background of the Study

The institution of marriage has evolved considerably over the past four decades. These changes reflect the interrelationship of marriage with other social phenomena such as social movements and ideologies, public policy, mobility patterns, and the impact of technology. Whitehead (1996) noted that there have been ideational shifts in the way in which family lives have been structured. One way in which these shifts manifest themselves is a change toward seeing marriage and parenthood as individual pursuits rather than socially defined roles. Getting married and having children are no longer requirements of adulthood or expected responses to social norms. Individuals increasingly view marriage as a means of personal fulfillment. If this goal is not achieved, marital bonds are easily dissolved. Glenn (1996) added that while people appear to want and expect more from marriage, they may not be willing to make the sacrifices necessary for marital success.

Changing roles and demographics have been identified by many researchers as trends affecting marriage (Bjorksten & Stewart, 1984; Kantor, 1993; Podbelski, 1993; Mackey & O’Brien, 1995; Glenn, 1996). There is increasing diversity in the way marital roles are carried out, as well as in the way family units are defined. Single parent families as well as same-gender couples with or without children are on the rise. Postponement of marriage to a later age, the increasing number of women in the workforce, and the declining number of children per family have all been pointed to as variables influencing marriage. Bjorksten and Stewart (1984) offered a sanguine interpretation of these factors, asserting that, while family life appears to be in disarray, the future will reveal which alternatives are socially adaptive and which are not.

Approximately 55% of American marriages end in divorce (Halford, Kelly, & Markman, 1977). Nevertheless, in Western countries over 90% of the population marry by the age of 50
(Halford, et al, 1997). Obviously, marriage remains a ubiquitous phenomenon. This fact, coupled with the high divorce rate has led researchers to increase emphasis on the factors that keep marriages together. A particular area of study is the longer term marriage. As life expectancy increases, couples can expect to be married for a longer period of time than were their ancestors (Ade-Ridder, 1985). Many couples can also expect to spend more years alone together after their children have grown (Mackey & O'Brien, 1995). One reason for targeting long term marriages is to find ways to ease the transition from child rearing to being alone as a couple. If factors sustaining long term marriages are identified, couples contemplating marriage will be better able to form realistic expectations of the marital relationship over time. These factors may be used in refining the measures of marital quality and stability which aid in the understanding of how couples live (Lewis & Spanier, 1979). The qualities that seem to help keep marriages together will have positive meaning for therapists working with those contemplating marriage, as well as those deep into their married lives (Klagsbrun, 1985).

The benefits of marriage have been well-documented (Stinnet, Carter, & Montgomery, 1972; Kobrin & Hendershot, 1977; Glenn & Weaver, 1981; Lauer, Lauer, & Kerr, 1990; Peters & Liebfles, 1997; Schmaling & Sher, 1997). Marriage has been associated with psychological well-being. Positive morale scores were significantly and positively related to participants’ perceptions of their marriage as very happy or happy, and becoming better over time (Stinnet, et al, 1972). Glenn and Weaver (1981) found that the contribution of marital happiness is much greater than any other type of satisfaction with regard to overall happiness. Married people are less likely to commit suicide or be under psychiatric care, either as inpatients or outpatients. They are also less likely to describe themselves as lonely (Lauer, et al, 1990; Peters & Liebfles, 1997). With regard to physical well-being, mortality rates were found to be lower for married people (Kobrin & Hendershot, 1977), and being unmarried has been found to be a risk factor for physical illness, especially among men (Schmaling & Sher, 1997).
Researchers studying marital quality or happiness have found it to be associated with a wide range of variables including participants' background, personality factors, homogamy, family of origin, attitudes, demographics, passage of time, and behavior (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Marital quality and marital stability have been found to be strongly correlated (Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Kelly & Conley, 1987; and Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Each of these measures of marital adjustment are considered in the present study.

The association between religious involvement and marital satisfaction and stability has been addressed by a number of researchers. Hansen (1992) observed that religion can perform a variety of functions for a couple including social control, social support, compensation, and insulation or buffering. Conflicting findings characterize much of the literature on religion and marriage. For example, while Larson and Goltz (1989) found church attendance to be a major predictor of personal commitment in a marital relationship, Heaton and Pratt (1990) found that church attendance contributed only slightly to marital success. However, as Wilson and Filsinger (1986) pointed out, both religiosity and marital adjustment are multidimensional phenomena. Findings are inexorably linked to researchers' operational definitions of these phenomena and the methods used to assess them.

An alternative approach to studying the correlation between aspects of religiosity and marital adjustment is the in-depth study of the interrelationship between membership in a particular religious group and marital quality and stability. Historically, marital research has focused on Caucasian, Protestant couples, although this bias is changing (Mackey & O'Brien, 1995; Kanter, 1993; Hicks & Platt, 1970). Despite the increasing attention given to religious affiliation, there is relatively little information concerning the specific ways in which involvement in a culture emphasizing certain religious beliefs affects the marital relationship. The study of marriage within the context of a specific religious community is an important step in understanding the more global relationship between religion and marriage.
Statement of the Problem

In this study, the long-term marriages of 12 couples who are members or attenders of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) were investigated. (Members and attenders share all rights and responsibilities within the community. Attendees are not allowed to attend certain administrative committee meetings.) Each of these couples was married at least twenty years. Each member of every couple had been a member or attender at Quaker Meeting for at least 20 years. Their youngest child was at least eighteen years old. In-depth semi-structured interviews were used to assess ways in which couples communicate and solve problems, and to identify and evaluate the roles, expectations, and needs which participants attempted to satisfy both as a couple and as individuals. The influence of factors external to the marriage such as family values and background, social factors that influenced the marriage, and the impact of religion and cultural factors were also investigated. Each spouse was interviewed separately about the influence of these factors on the quality and stability of his or her marriage over the course of three periods of time. These included the pre-child rearing, child rearing, and post-child rearing years.

Karney and Bradbury (1995) asserted that theory regarding marital quality and stability should “encompass a full range of possible predictors of marital outcome. . . . specify mechanisms of change within marriage. . . . [and] account for variability in marital outcomes between couples and within couples over time” (p. 4). A qualitative methodology as applied in this study provided a means to investigate marital quality and stability from these three perspectives.

A stable marriage is defined as one that has not been broken up either by divorce or separation, or by the death of one of the spouses (Lewis & Spanier, 1979). Much of the literature on marriage has focused on marital quality. As indicated by Karney and Bradbury (1995), many of these studies have relied on cross-sectional data. However, these researchers also pointed out
that, according to their review of the literature, over 100 longitudinal studies of marriage have also been published. One difficulty with longitudinal research lies in the possibility that changing marital outcomes may affect a given predictor more than that predictor affects change in marital outcomes. In other words, stress and marital quality may alternate as independent variables over time. One way to assess reciprocal relationships between variables is the use of cross-sectional and retrospective data (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). The current study used retrospective data from detailed interviews with 12 couples. Rather than evaluating one point in time, these 12 marriages were examined over a period of at least 20 years, enabling the researcher to assess themes in long term marital relationships. A particular point of interest in this study was the reciprocal relationship between involvement in Quakerism and marital quality. As Karney and Bradbury (1995) recommend, at this stage in the research on marriage, it is appropriate to adopt a “broader focus” (p. 28). The qualitative approach used in this study encourages such a focus.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

In their discussion of qualitative research methodology, Strauss and Corbin (1990) described the notion of “building theory” (p. 22). This researcher adopted the perspective that theory can be used to both explain a phenomenon and provide a “framework for action” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 22). Further, this theory must be “grounded” meaning that it is derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. Rather than beginning with a theory and attempting to prove it, this researcher has chosen long term marriage as a particular area of study and used the relevant emergent data to contribute to a theory of marital quality and stability (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). The use of a semi-structured interview enabled the researcher to investigate areas previously identified in the literature as having a bearing on marital quality and stability. However, the open-ended nature of the questions allowed participants to add their own ideas about areas influential in marriage. The researcher was free to ask follow-up questions to explore
areas which seemed of particular importance to the participants. A quantitative approach alone
would not have allowed for such in-depth investigation.

A qualitative approach was appropriate also because the participants were asked to attach
meanings to their experiences, activities, and difficulties. In this way, as Coffey and Atkinson
(1996) asserted, theoretical problems arise from the “everyday realities and meanings of social
worlds and social actors” (p. 5). This approach is in contrast to one in which problems are taken
from other sources such as policy makers or other researchers. In addition, the methodology in
the current study did not allow professional jargon or theories to obstruct the voices of the
participants themselves (Mackey & O’Brien, 1995).

For the purposes of this study, the significance of the researcher as the primary
instrument of data collection was viewed as a strength given her clinical training and skill and her
level of knowledge of Quakerism. Wax (1971) asserts that “understanding. . . is a precondition of
research (italics original) in any social situation” (p. 13). “Understanding,” according to Wax is a
“social phenomenon of shared (italics original) meanings (p. 11). Through prior knowledge of
the population studied and her ability to learn through interviewing, the researcher was able to
come to such “understanding.”

Obviously, the researcher had to rely on her feelings, impressions, and judgments while
collecting the data. The researcher and participants influenced each other with regard to
questions and responses. The researcher was influenced by myriad factors including her choice
of theory, values, and methodology. The findings are therefore biased. The researcher attempted
to minimize this bias by following the procedure suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1990). She
remained mindful of the marriage literature while conducting interviews. She regarded
categories, hypotheses, and questions from the literature as provisional until checked against the
actual data. She also adhered to specific research procedures which involved transcription of all
interview data and coding of this data using a scoring system developed by O’Brien & Mackey
This scoring system allowed for quantification of the data. The researcher and a male counterpart coded the data independently and then reached consensual agreement on the scoring.

The use of self-report data introduced another source of bias. Participants may have been influenced by social desirability or inaccurate perceptions (Norton, 1983). As they were required to recall earlier stages of their marriage, participants may have distorted information or left out important variables intentionally or unintentionally. Such distortion may have led to inaccuracy in the emergent themes. The researcher attempted to operationally define the questions in the interview. However, some participants may have interpreted the questions in ways unintended by the researcher making varied responses based on their interpretations. For example, the concept of decision making may be applied to a wide range of situations and therefore interpreted in a variety of ways. In this manner, participants contributed significantly to the identification and interpretation of outcomes and themes (Kantor, 1993).

There are subjective and stylistic factors which limit the extent to which the current study can be replicated as well as the extent to which one may generalize from the findings. However, one purpose of this research was to gain a thorough description of marriage as experienced and recalled rather than to test a particular hypothesis. This purpose necessitated the examination of highly complex relationships and social processes. A second purpose of this research was to develop hypotheses for intensive research on a more specific phenomenon. To accomplish these aims, a qualitative research design was deemed most appropriate (Warwick & Lininger, 1975; Wax, 1971).

Significance of the Study

As Mackey & O’Brien (1995) emphasized, there is a need for understanding lasting marital relationships. This is particularly important when one considers divorce statistics and the consequences of divorce. Gottman (1994) noted that estimates of the divorce rate in United States range from 50% to 67%. In spite of these statistics, as noted earlier, over 90% of the
population in Western countries marry by age 50 years (Halford, et al, 1997). Thus marriage seems a ubiquitous, but risky undertaking. Separation and divorce have been associated with increased risk for psychopathology, increased risk of physical illness, suicide, homicide, and mortality from diseases. Lower marital quality and the dissolution of marital relationships have been correlated with lower immune function. In addition, marital disruption has been associated with a range of negative effects upon children including depression and physical health problems (Gottman, 1994).

Cicchetti (1989) emphasized a developmental approach in which processes related to normal psychological and cognitive development are understood. In this way, pathology may be better understood as well. By adopting a developmental stance with regard to marital stability, as did the current study, a preventative model of therapy may be emphasized in which couples can be assisted in maintaining stable marriages. If the factors related to marital stability are identified, clinicians working with unhappy couples may be able to identify areas of difficulty and assist couples in making the changes necessary to maintain marital stability.

The majority of existing counseling interventions and assessment techniques have been designed to focus on the needs of young and middle-aged couples (Dickson, 1997). It is incumbent upon therapists to appreciate and address the experiences and difficulties of older couples, particularly as the population of elderly individuals increases. The current study provided information regarding the later years of marriage.

There is little research concerning the relationship between affiliation with a specific religious group and marital stability. There is no published research focusing upon a Quaker population. Markowski and Greenwood (1984) identified a substantial positive relationship between marital stability and social interest. This finding is of particular importance in considering a Quaker population. A hallmark of the Religious Society of Friends is its emphasis on social concerns. In general, outward displays of religious commitment as well as inward spiritual beliefs may have an impact upon one’s attitude toward, and behaviors within marriage.
The results of this study will assist psychotherapists, researchers and others in understanding marital stability among Quakers and other minority religious groups. In addition, this study will facilitate understanding of the origins of the Religious Society of Friends, current Quaker practices, and their influence upon American culture.
Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Marital Stability and Quality

Both marital stability and quality are considered in this review. Marital stability refers to whether or not a marriage is intact (Lewis & Spanier, 1979). A less straightforward concept, marital quality has been defined by Lewis and Spanier (1979) as the subjective evaluation of a marriage with regard to a number of interpersonal relationship styles and dyadic interactions that range along a continuum differentiating levels of marital functioning. Thus, unlike marital stability, marital quality is not an orthogonal variable. The latter is used as a general concept which encompasses such terms as marital satisfaction, happiness, and adjustment. For the purposes of this review, these terms were used interchangeably.

In their analysis of longitudinal research concerning the stability and quality of marriage, Karney and Bradbury (1995) identified four theoretical perspectives: Social exchange theory; behavioral theory; attachment theory; and crisis theory. Levinger (1965) is an example of a social exchange theorist. He asserted that marital stability is a function of the “attractions within and barriers around the marriage, and an inverse function of such attractions and barriers from other relationships” (p. 19). Levinger applied this model to research on divorce since such “low cohesiveness” (p. 20) relationships can be much more easily identified that those of high cohesiveness. Sources of attraction included affectional rewards such as esteem for spouse, socioeconomic rewards, and similarity of social status. Sources of barrier strength included feelings of obligation to dependent children and the marriage, moral proscriptions associated with religion, and external pressures such as community stigma. Lewis and Spanier (1979) were also proponents of exchange theory in their delineation of seven “threshold variables” (p. 273) which they suspected are most important in making the difference between marital stability and separation. These variables are: Marital expectations; commitment to the marriage and its
associated obligations; tolerance for conflict and disharmony; religious doctrine and commitment; external pressures and amenability to social stigma; divorce law and availability of legal aid; and real and perceived alternatives.

Karney and Bradbury (1995) described behavioral theory as concerned with attributions spouses make for partner behaviors. Cognitive responses affect marriage through their influence on subsequent interaction behaviors. Over time, the accumulation of experiences during and after interaction are thought to influence spouses' judgment of marital quality. In his research on factors contributing to marital instability, Gottman (1994), a behavioral theorist, identified "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" (p. 110) which are the negative behaviors of criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling. These behaviors are thought to be particularly important in the accumulation of negative judgments about the marital relationship, ultimately resulting in separation or divorce. Filsinger and Thoma (1988) also offered a behavioral perspective in their research with 21 premarital couples who were followed over a five-year period. Their work complements that of Gottman (1994) in their finding that "behavioral stinginess" (p. 793) with regard to positive behavior was characteristic of couples who broke up within the five-year period.

Markman (1979) used a behavioral model of marriage in order to predict the relationship satisfaction of couples planning marriage. Using a longitudinal design, Markman studied 26 couples who were planning marriage. His findings suggest that unrewarding interaction patterns precede the development of relationship dissatisfaction, and that early signs of future distress are potentially recognizable in premarital interaction independent of a couple's premarital relationship satisfaction and problems.

The third theoretical perspective identified by Karney and Bradbury (1995) is attachment theory. This perspective brings an object relations perspective to marital quality and stability. Kotler and Omodei (1988) adopted such a perspective in their assertion that the quality of primary attachment relationships is linked with subsequent personality development. In their
study of 60 couples at various stages in the family life cycle, the researchers found that in later stages of marriage, social bonds with parents and significant others in childhood have a bearing upon the quality of the marital relationship. Scharff and Scharff (1991) discussed projective and introjective identification as operative elements in marriage. The researchers asserted that projective identification is the process through which a spouse projects a "disclaimed" (p. 8) part of the self onto his or her partner. The partner unconsciously takes it in and feels like that projected part through introjective identification, and then behaves in such a way as to confirm or modify this feeling. Projective identification is viewed as the basis for both empathy and intimacy within the marital relationship. Thus, spouses are looking for ways to get their needs met. This perspective is shared by Cole (1985) who differentiated between high- and low-quality marriages. High-quality marriages facilitate the ability of each partner to get his or her needs met. In such marriages, expectations are based in reality and reflect partners' abilities and interests as well as situational factors. Conversely, low-quality marriages frequently fail to help get partners' needs met. Low-quality marriages are likely to result when expectations are unrealistic and inflexible.

Crisis theory is the fourth theoretical perspective reviewed by Karney and Bradbury (1995). The researchers noted that this theory derives from efforts to explain how families react to stressful events. Marriage researchers have extrapolated from this theory to explain and predict marital outcome. This theory emphasizes the importance of external events to changes in marriage.

Developmental theory was not specifically reviewed by Karney and Bradbury (1995), although their own formulation of marriage emphasized the notion of adaptive processes as does developmental research. Masten (1987) noted that research on resilience has emerged from work on vulnerability, risk, adaptation, and competence. Such research can account for differences in marital quality and stability over time. In their study of long term marriage, Mackey and O'Brien (1995) found that adaptability and resilience are key factors in understanding marital quality and
stability. A variety of developmental factors and tasks have been identified by researchers as important in marital adjustment. For example, White, Speisman, Jackson, Bartis, and Costos (1986) focused upon the relationship between intimacy maturity and marital adjustment. The investigators found that for males, greater intimacy maturity was associated with better marital adjustment. For females, intimacy maturity was found to be unrelated to marital adjustment. Rather, marital adjustment in females was also related to their spouse’s intimacy maturity. This research is important in highlighting gender differences in perceptions of marital adjustment.

Gender differences in developmental adjustment in marriage were studied by Rollins and Feldman (1970). Men and women both reported a decline in “frequency of positive companionship experience” (p. 26) from the beginning of marriage to the preschool stage, then a leveling off during the remainder of stages leading to retirement. However, men and women differed in their evaluation of marital satisfaction during childbearing and child rearing. While husbands’ ratings of their level of satisfaction varied little over these phases of the family life cycle, wives reported a decrease in general marital satisfaction and a high level of negative feelings from marital interaction during these phases.

In their review of midlife development, Antonucci and Akiyama (1997) compared groups of young and midlife men and women and noted that both genders reported that marriage restricted life in negative ways much more if they were married in 1976 than if they were married in 1957. Not surprisingly, those married in 1957 described being happier in their marriages than those married in 1976. The researchers also discussed some of the transitions occurring during parenthood. Of the two cohorts of women studied – those married in 1957 and those married in 1976 – the latter group were more likely to show lower levels of psychological well-being when their children left home. The investigators speculated that women in the older cohort who were young adults during World War II were more likely to have been encouraged to join the labor force. Another developmental phenomenon explored by Antonucci and Akiyama (1997) was the fact that midlife adults, particularly midlife women, are called upon to take care of the needs of
aging relatives as well as those of their children. The researchers noted that support is not unidirectional and that women may also receive support from their older children and aging relatives.

The transition to parenthood has been identified as an important influence on marital quality and stability by a number of researchers. For example, Lewis (1988) found no change in basic marital structure for the majority of 38 couples studied before and after the transition to parenthood. This finding contrasts with those of other researchers including Cowan, et al, 1985; Feldman and Nash, 1984; Belsky, et al, 1983; and Rossi, 1968. As noted earlier, there appear to be gender differences in the way in which this transition is perceived. For example, Cowan, et al found that a combination of gender differentiation and increasing conflict appeared to lead to lowered marital satisfaction for both men and women. Feldman and Nash (1984) observed that the transition to parenthood involved major role upheaval with more positive and negative changes reported by women than men. Rossi (1968) concluded that new mothers are at risk for a variety of undesirable consequences, including negative changes in their marriages. Belsky, et al (1983) concurred with these findings, but modified them somewhat by stating that while an addition of an infant has a negative impact on the marital relationship, in other respects such as the area of individual differences, it has relatively little impact.

The influence of parenting, intimacy, conflict, and decision making on marital satisfaction was studied by Mackey and O’Brien (1995) whose work was a primary influence on the present study. These researchers used a qualitative and phenomenological research design in studying each member of 60 couples. The reader is referred to Chapter 3 of this study and to Mackey and O’Brien (1995) for a more in-depth discussion of methodology. The researchers found that mothers did most, if not all, the caring for infants. As children grew older, fathers became more involved with child care. Satisfaction with marriage declined for both spouses during the parenting years, especially for women – a finding consistent with most of the research cited above.
With regard to intimacy, Mackey and O'Brien (1995) differentiated between psychological intimacy, sexual intimacy, and the interrelationship between psychological and sexual intimacy. Half of all respondents spoke of the early years of their marriage as a time of psychological intimacy. While there was a slight decline during the child rearing years, the majority of men and women described their marriages as psychologically intimate during the empty-nest years. This type of intimacy was described by the researchers as a developmental process. In the early years of marriage, satisfaction and frequency of sexual intercourse were highly correlated. Frequency of sexual intercourse dropped during the child rearing and post-parenting years and so did satisfaction. However, sex was still regarded as important among those men and women who did not consider it satisfying in the empty-nest years. Physical intimacy without sexual intercourse remained fairly constant over the three phases of marriage studied.

Most conflict observed by Mackey and O'Brien (1995) was focused on difficulties negotiating marital roles and responsibilities. The parenting years were found to be the most conflictual of marital relationships, especially during the adolescence of children when 30% of couples reported major conflict. Throughout marriage, men were more avoidant than women in dealing with conflict.

In terms of decision making, most respondents viewed themselves as having a logical style. However, spouses having a similar decision making style were no more satisfied with the process than were those whose styles were quite different. Over the years, there was an overall trend away from separateness and toward mutuality in decision making, although there were some cultural differences within this trend.

Mackey and O'Brien's (1995) discussion of factors contributing to marital satisfaction centered on five significant clusters which are "containment of conflict; mutuality in decision making; quality of communication; relational values of trust, respect, empathic understanding and equity; and sexual and psychological intimacy" (p. 142). As noted earlier, adaptability and
resiliency were also found to be factors contributing to marital satisfaction. A final critical variable contributing to marital satisfaction is commitment.

Religion and Marriage

Most of the research regarding marriage has focused on Caucasian, Protestant couples, although this bias is changing (Mackey & O’Brien, Kanter, 1993, Hicks & Platt, 1970). Despite the increasing attention given to religious affiliation, there is relatively little information concerning the specific ways in which involvement in a culture emphasizing particular religious beliefs affects the marital relationship. The idea that there is a link between the institutions of religion and marriage in modern society may seem implausible to those who accept the “secularization hypothesis” (Hansen, 1992, p. 189). Secularization refers to the process by which sectors of culture and society are removed from the domination of religious institutions. This process produces individuals who look upon both the world and their own lives without the benefit of religious interpretations. However, Hansen asserted that religion can provide a normative system with a set of expectations for husbands and wives by which they evaluate their marital relationship.

Religious involvement and affiliation have been associated with marital satisfaction and adjustment. Hunt and King (1978) found that particular types of religiosity are related to success in marriage. Emphasis on a combination of belief, effort, and participation in a religion was related to better marital adjustment, happiness and satisfaction. Even when controlling for social desirability among respondents, Filsinger and Wilson (1984) found religiosity to be most predictive of marital adjustment among a field of nine variables. While it may be that married people behave more equitably because they are committed to each other, Larson and Goltz (1989a) argued that commitment is the source of making a marriage better. From this hypothesis it follows that positive behaviors such as communication and resolution of differences are less likely to occur if a couple is uncommitted.
It appears that differences exist in the process of marital adjustment between couples of differing religious denominations. Mackey and O'Brien (1995) hypothesized that Protestants, as compared to Jewish or Mexican-American (Catholic) couples, entered marriage with "less sense of who they were to be in their relationships. When behaviors were not ascribed as they were for Jewish and Mexican-American couples, negotiations were required to work out mutually acceptable roles. As couples struggled to clarify gender-related behaviors appropriate to their relationships, conflict was a result especially in relationships where expectations were ambiguous or incompatible" (p. 68).

Thus, both marriage and religiosity are complex variables whose interrelationships are only partially understood. Among psychologists, there is increasing openness to the idea that there is healthy potential in religious involvement (Bergin, 1991; McIntosh & Spilka, 1990). It is therefore important to investigate further the role of religion in the lives of married couples. At a time of high divorce rates, it makes particular sense to elucidate those aspects of religion which serve to maintain long term marriages. To this end, it is most useful to initially focus on a particular religious group. Even as Protestants may be seen as religiously distinct from Catholics and Jews, there is wide variation in beliefs of those involved in various denominations of Protestantism.

Quakers

The Religious Society of Friends has been chosen for study for several reasons. Numbering approximately 216,000 worldwide, Quakers have had a social impact which belies their relatively small numbers. Since 1943, Quakers have maintained one of the most influential lobbies in Washington, D.C. The Friends Committee on National Legislation opposes capital punishment, conscription and military spending while supporting peace, the maintaining and sharing of the world's resources, and human rights (Johnson, 1991). In 1947, the Nobel Prize for
Peace was jointly awarded to two organizations: The Friends Service Council in Great Britain, and the American Friends Service Committee – both Quaker organizations (Trueblood, 1971).

As of this writing, there has been no research studying long-term Quaker marriages. In order to investigate the impact of this religion on long-term marriages, it is critical to have a thorough understanding of Quaker religion and culture. The Quaker meetings from which participants in this study were recruited are “unprogrammed” meetings. This means that they are without clergy, music, or offerings. They are based on silent waiting upon “the Spirit” which reflects Quaker understanding of the nature of humans’ relationship to God. Friends believe that every person is endowed by God with what is commonly known as a “light within” (Johnson, 1991, p. 6). This light enables each person to know God’s will directly, without intercession from clergy. All are free to search for God in their own way, and some share their reflections by speaking in meetings as they are led by God. The concept of the light within leads Quakers to believe that all life is sacred. This is the source of Quaker social testimonies concerning pacifism, social justice, and for the relief of suffering.

Quaker belief is a process meant to be practiced rather than a theory meant to be accepted. This differentiates Quakers from other religious groups. Friends generally believe that they must serve God, or a higher Truth, through service to society. Quaker attitudes toward their concerns, and the way in which they act upon them, arise from fundamental beliefs about truth, meaning, reason, and the self. According to Cox (1985), these four beliefs are contrary to much of Western culture, and represent the major distinguishing features of Quakerism. Quakers tend to view truth as a living, evolving entity in which all participate. Following from this notion of the truth as a fluent body is the idea that meaning is a social activity. For example, when an individual endeavors to “gather a sense of a meeting,” he or she seeks a collective meaning rather than a democratic head count. This is a critical component of the Quaker meeting. While it may be considered antidemocratic, decisions are made in a spirit of seeking truth which may involve denial of self-will or seeking truth in a manner distinct from one’s own personal or group interest.
Unlike other faiths, Quakerism builds all on the experience of the gathered meeting. Together, Friends ideally experience something beyond themselves, superior to the often pedestrian emotions and activities of human life. No matter how they explain the experience to themselves, the event which they share is paramount. In reaching a decision, the event demands that a person sacrifice self-interest and seek after a higher truth than that which he or she would have individually achieved. This notion is a complex one, and may seem to conflict with the central Quaker belief that there is “that of God in every man.” All people are thought to have equal access to God. Therefore all opinions should carry equal weight. However, as noted above, in practice, a democratic process does not occur. It is recognized that some Friends have more wisdom or experience with regard to a particular issue, and their thoughts are given greater consideration.

Reason and feeling are seen as two aspects of one process, not as separate forces at odds within the individual. When one “follows the light” along a particular path, feeling directs individual steps, while reason directs the path made up of these steps. Finally, Cox noted that the self is inherently social and transitional. However, people are not merely social. They are also distinct members of a unified body. As Quakerism has its roots in Christianity, many Quakers consider themselves as distinct members of a unified body of Christ. It is important to note, however, that not all Quakers consider themselves to be Christians. The mid-Atlantic and Northeastern regions of the United States are areas in which considerable tolerance exists for beliefs which are not Christocentric. However, the Christocentric Quaker is probably the easiest for most Americans to understand. This Quaker shares with most American Protestants a conviction that Jesus was the Son of God, that the gospels express His teaching, and that He is active in our world today. In addition to the mutual trust at a Friends meeting is the conviction that the spirit of Jesus Christ dwells in each person.

Sheeran (1983) distinguished between two groups of Christocentric Quakers. The first tend to be fundamentalist in their theology. They take Scripture literally, and believe that the
details of each miracle in the Bible are historically precise. The second subgroup identified by Sheeran tends to hold theological positions similar to those of mainstream Protestants and Catholics. For these Quakers, the Jesus of history is the same person as the Inner Light of today, but the literal acceptance of events and statements in the Bible must be modified by understanding the literary genres used in each passage, and ancient ideas about history, among other avenues of scholarly thought. Although Scripture and present revelation are both channels to God, the latter are often more reliable indicators of divine guidance.

Universalist Quakers are another group identified by Sheeran (1983). Like Christocentric Quakers, Universalists can be divided into two subgroups. The first subgroup includes those who believe in some exterior guiding principle beyond mankind's life. Jesus is typically viewed as an especially great man, whose devotion to God is a supreme example. However, Jesus was not God, and his death did not enable salvation of mankind. In fact, man is good by nature. He needs divine guidance, but not redemption from a state of sin. The divine Other affords guidance to those who seek it. Such guidance is received in private reflection, and in meeting. For such Quakers, Christian language is a time-bound artifact of the age in which Quaker founders lived.

Sheeran (1983) described a second group of Universalists which he called “humanists” (p. 76). These individuals regard religious language as appropriate for emphasizing the importance of human potential. Rather than a religion, many of these Universalists regard Quakerism as a form of humanism concerned with ethics and improvement of the human condition. Among these Universalists may be found non-practicing Jews, Hindus, and Buddhists. A number of these Quakers find their way to the group through organizations such as the American Friends Service Committee.

Many Quakers are more concerned with social activism than theological questions regarding the nature of God. These individuals tend to emphasize the practical, rather than theoretical, nature of the Quaker decision making process. Seeking unity is important because a
larger social impact can be made if all are together in a practical way to work on solving a social problem.

Quakers have traditionally been active in attempts to bring about peace, and to alleviate social ills. According to Cox (1985), the structure of the Quaker meeting and decision making process give rise to these efforts. He delineated a series of steps which facilitate focusing leadings to “bearing witness” (p. 14) or taking concrete action. First, an individual must achieve some inner distance from impulses, desires, fears, frustrations, and anger. This can indeed be a difficult task. To achieve this state, Friends may pray, focus on a passage from the Bible, or meditate. This type of freedom from everyday distractions can lead to an experience of warmth and light, providing the basis for creativity. Sitting in silence in worship with others can facilitate consideration of concerns central to the larger community. As people begin to speak to a particular issue, insight and understanding deepen and connect. Inevitably, there are many points of view, and there is no overarching rule in adjudicating differences of opinion. Rather, dialogue continues until a consensus is gathered. In Quaker tradition, consensus is viewed as a practice of communal discernment that yields not only agreement but truth – a truth which is grounded in something beyond the individuals involved. “Clearness” (p. 12) is found when all are aware of a variety of perspectives on an issue, and all positions are respected. There is unanimity, which does not necessarily mean that all agree. There is always room for dissention, but those who have reached consensus sustain an inclusive focus in their activity. This inclusive focus is what many Quakers mean by simplicity. Certainly, clearness simplifies. However, such simplicity is not a matter of lack of complexity of thought. Rather, it is unity of the meeting’s thoughts and deeds.

Clearness can compel activity. “Bearing witness” (p. 14) is a call to verbal action, or to activity in public or private life. An important characteristic of bearing witness is that it is not necessarily thought of as a means to an end. For example, some Quakers are war tax resisters. One technique is to withhold that percentage of income tax calculated to fund defense and war-related projects. These resisters are aware that they cannot control the ways in which their tax
dollars are allocated. What motivates this activity is, primarily, the conviction that witness to the truth must be borne.

Depending upon the political climate, Quaker testimony regarding peace and non-violence has been both positively and negatively socially sanctioned. The area of military service has been particularly volatile. In recent history, United States entry into World War II prompted many male Quakers to register as conscientious objectors with their local draft boards. Alternative service included work in medical corps and in United States psychiatric hospitals. During the Vietnam War, Quakers, without permission from the U.S. government, delivered medical supplies to North Vietnam. The current edition of the New England Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice (1985) indicated that, despite the legal requirement to register for the draft, the meeting supports those “both Friends and non-Friends, whose consciences lead them to reject participation in the armed forces” and “[encourages] them to follow their consciences, and... [stands] ready to help... with information, counselling, and spiritual and practical support” (p. 188). Throughout the history of Quakerism, there has been resistance to participation in war. One may speculate that Quaker families have had to endure social and perhaps economic hardship resulting from a pacifist stance. Increased marital and family tension very likely resulted.

Taibbi (1997) suggested that couples continue to feel in their relationships what they have always felt. What changes over the years is their length of endurance, and their isolation. People have come to believe that they either have to somehow make themselves and their relationships stronger, or learn to give up on them earlier. What is necessary is to learn the need to have community. Many adults wounded from their last intimate relationship wonder how they can isolate themselves from further pain or figure out what went wrong the last time in order to prevent it from happening again. In Taibbi's opinion, these individuals are not focusing their energies in a helpful manner. Instead of relying on couplehood for happiness, it better serves people to cultivate a web of relationships to “[spread] the emotional load” (p. 61). Within Quaker
meetings, there is a strong emphasis on community. Rarely are unilateral decisions made by individuals. Various committees are set up to handle aspects of meeting life such as maintaining a library, caring for the physical plant, working for peace and social concerns, ministry and counsel, and the First Day (Sunday) School. The community can serve as a buffer between a couple or family and the social consequences of adopting an unpopular political stance. In times of distress, the meeting can offer spiritual and practical support.

According to Sheeran (1983), Quaker concepts of unity and community lead to increased responsibility for those who attend meetings for business. Out of a united decision comes a high degree of obligation to carry out the decision and make it work. One cannot attend a meeting for business and claim to be a disinterested observer. In addition, there is the presupposition that individuals acting upon Quaker decisions are willing to start from the viewpoint of the group’s good, and not from a personal perspective. In a manner similar to Taibbi (1997), Sheeran speculated that the emphasis on individualism predominant in American culture may have a deleterious effect on the present and future of Quakerism. People socialized into individualism require particular skills to adapt to the communitarian nature of Quaker decision making. A person without these skills may grow impatient at the slow speed at which this decision making process can occur. For such people, an obvious solution is to avoid Quaker meetings for business altogether. This approach is supported in a society in which fewer individuals are self-employed and more women are combining full-time employment with family responsibilities. For these people, the addition of community responsibilities may represent an extra, unwanted burden. One way for the Society of Friends to counter this difficulty is to educate both adults and children to view themselves fundamentally as members of a larger community.

**Quaker marriage**

There is a clear set of procedures to be followed when a couple wishes to be married through a Quaker meeting. The New England Yearly Meeting is comprised of eight quarterly
meetings. There are monthly meetings within the quarterly meetings. Individual meetings in various towns throughout New England make up the monthly, quarterly and yearly meetings. Within the New England Yearly Meeting, as outlined in the guidebook Faith and Practice (1995), both the form of the wedding ceremony and the process to prepare for it remain the same as in the early days of the Society. The procedure is meant to allow Friends to focus upon the spiritual nature of marriage, to deepen their ties to each other and their meeting. First, both parties write letters announcing their intentions to the monthly meeting of which they are members. The male of the couple asks two male Friends to ensure clearness from other engagements, and to make sure as possible that there is nothing to interfere with the happiness or permanence of the marriage. The female of the couple chooses two female Friends to act in the same capacity. These two “clearness committees” meet jointly with the couple and with each other. The committees give reports at the next session of the monthly meeting, at which the couple is encouraged to be present. With the monthly meeting’s approval, the couple can proceed with the marriage.

After the couple has been given approval to get on with the marriage arrangements, the meeting appoints at least two male and two female Friends as a committee to attend to, and oversee the wedding. This “committee of oversight” carries out such responsibilities as seeing that a marriage license has been obtained, ensuring that any revision of the vows retains their religious character, attending the marriage and reception to see that they are properly conducted, making sure that legal requirements are fulfilled, and that the marriage certificate is handled properly.

As a publication of the Wellesley (Massachusetts) Friends Meeting (1989) pointed out, a Friends’ wedding is a Meeting for Worship in which a marriage takes place. In some meetings, it is customary for the bride and groom to walk in together and sit facing the meeting. This is in acknowledgement of the fact that they are free to give themselves to each other. There is no need for the female to be escorted or given in marriage, although this can be done if desired.
Following a brief period of worship, the bride and groom rise, take each other by the right hand and exchange vows as follows:

“In the presence of God and these our friends, I take thee, [name], to be my wife (husband), promising with Divine assistance to be a loving and faithful husband (wife) as long as we both shall live” (p. 13).

The couple is seated, and the marriage certificate is signed and read aloud by a designated person. This represents the announcement that the couple is husband and wife. The meeting then settles into silence during which the ceremony continues through prayer, meditation, and spoken messages. After about a half an hour, the meeting clerk or other person chosen to close the meeting rises and suggests that the wedding party withdraw. A few more minutes of silence ensue after which the individual ending the meeting closes it by shaking hands with the person sitting next to him or her.

The marriage ceremony is noteworthy in its emphasis upon gender equality. This follows in part from the beliefs of George Fox, a 17th century Quaker preacher, that women and men alike receive grace and share equal responsibility in service to God. In a relationship of subjugation or domination, one party is left freer to accomplish his or her goals. Fox asserted that that the marital union is spiritual and sexual. Each partner’s calling has equal value, the rights and opinions of children are important, and the meeting has a corporate responsibility to help couples find their way. Fox carried out these beliefs in his 1669 marriage to Margaret Fell. At the time of their marriage, Fox was 45 years old, and Fell was a 55 year old widow (Hill, 1993).

The Quaker wedding ceremony is also unique in its simplicity. There is generally no pastor, although if the couple wishes, a pastor can conduct the marriage service. There is no picture taking allowed during the meeting. There can be music, readings, or alteration of vows, but the committee of oversight is responsible to see that the wedding is conducted with dignity, reverence, and simplicity. As is characteristic of Quaker decision making, the clearness and oversight committees help to ensure that the decision to be married is not made hastily. When a couple is married “under the care of a meeting,” it means that the meeting assumes some
responsibility to sustain this marriage. If a couple experiences marital difficulties, the meeting may name a special committee to assist the individuals to explore all possible options. If divorce or separation is decided upon, the committee will assist the couple going through these processes.

Some Friends have chosen a religious ceremony without legal sanction. This is in accordance with Fox's teaching that marriage is spiritual. There is new significance in this teaching as lesbians and gay men seek marriage. Meetings which are part of the New England Yearly Meeting have conducted same-gender marriages. There has been much discussion and consideration of this issue, and the New England Yearly Meeting has not attained unity on this matter. However, Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns is a strong presence in the New England Yearly Meeting, and same-gender marriage is an active concern.

Quaker Values

Important Quaker values eluded to earlier are simplicity and integrity. Living a simple life means a number of things. Internally, one should cultivate "an attitude of meekness and humility" (New England Yearly Meeting, 1985, p. 142). This attitude is fostered by honesty and sincerity with one's spirit, fellow people, and with God. Faithfulness to a limited number of social responsibilities and concerns assists in maintaining a life of simplicity, as does diminished interest in attaining material things. Communication is meant to be simple and direct. The New England Yearly Meeting (1985) quotes an excerpt from the London Yearly Meeting speaking directly to this point: "But above all things, my brethren, swear not; neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath; but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation" (p. 144).
Chapter 3
Methodology

Introduction

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the study and its significance. In Chapter 2, the literature was discussed as it relates to themes associated with marital quality and stability, factors specific to Quaker couples, and an overview of the research on the impact of developmental factors specific to adults. In addition, information was provided regarding Quaker history, beliefs and culture.

Choice of Qualitative Research Methodology

As Wax (1971) pointed out, there is a variety of perspectives inherent in qualitative research. There is a range of researchers' talents and interests, a diversity of possible social settings and potential goals of research. As noted earlier, this diversity promotes a distinctive form of analysis which avoids a social problem perspective by asking how participants assign meanings to their behaviors and experience (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). This study used the research methodology described by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Their notion of "grounded theory" (p. 24) indicates that it is well-suited in inductively identifying concepts and hypotheses relevant to the substantive area being studied. As Hicks and Platt (1970) observed, when studying the complex phenomenon of marriage, it is important for the researcher to avoid imposing various values and assumptions upon the data. A qualitative approach in which themes are allowed to emerge from the data provides a richness of information which enables a more detailed understanding of relationship dynamics.

Sheeran (1983) pointed out that there are several types of self-understanding among those who consider themselves to be Quakers. In fact, any given individual is likely to hold a combination of positions. In addition, he or she may demonstrate ambiguous or even seemingly contradictory levels of understanding. The qualitative approach used in this study allowed
participants the flexibility to articulate their own perceptions of Quakerism and the impact it has on marriage and family life. This method immeasurably enhanced the richness and the quality of the data obtained.

Research Design and Procedures

Participants

The sample for this study was composed of 12 Quaker couples who were married for a minimum of 20 years, and whose youngest child was 18 years of age or older. In recruiting participants, both members and attenders of Quaker meetings were solicited, since both groups have essentially the same rights and responsibilities with regard to the meeting. All participants were either members or attenders of Quaker meeting for at least 20 years. Quakers make a distinction between “birthright” and “convinced” Friends. Birthright Friends are those whose parents both were members. Given Quakers’ general reluctance to proselytize, the term “convinced” is used rather than the term “converted.” While a Quaker upbringing is assumed if one is a birthright Friend, the choice of what religious path to follow is considered an adult decision and, birthright or not, the mature Friend must be a convinced Friend as well (Smith, 1992).

The age, years married, number of children, income level, and Quaker status of the participants are presented in Table 1. The participants ranged in age from 48 to 81. The mean age of the females was 59, while males averaged 63 years. In all but two instances, husbands were older than their wives. The number of years married ranged from 21 to 53 with a mean of 33. Two of the males and none of the females had been divorced once prior to the current marriage. Each couple had from zero to four children with a mean of 2. The median joint annual income for the sample was over $100,000 with a range beginning at $30,000. Four couples were comprised of birthright Friends, while in six couples, each spouse was a convinced Friend. In two couples, the wife was a birthright Friend while the husband was a convinced Friend.
Table 1

Age, Years Married, Number of Children, Joint Income, and Quaker Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Couple</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Yrs. Married</th>
<th># of Children</th>
<th>Joint Income</th>
<th>Quaker Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Arthur</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$100K+</td>
<td>Birthright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Birthright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$30K</td>
<td>Convinced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth</td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Convinced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cal</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$100K+</td>
<td>Convinced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyd</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Convinced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$70K</td>
<td>Convinced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drew</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Convinced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$33K</td>
<td>Convinced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eve</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Birthright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$70K</td>
<td>Convinced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fran</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Convinced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$100K+</td>
<td>Birthright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gail</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Birthright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hal</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$65K</td>
<td>Birthright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Birthright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ike</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$100K+</td>
<td>Convinced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Birthright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$75K</td>
<td>Convinced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joyce</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Convinced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$100K+</td>
<td>Birthright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Birthright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lou</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$100K+</td>
<td>Convinced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Convinced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Age range: 48-81; X=61
Female X=59
Male X=63

X=33
X=2
Median Income=$100K+
Birthright=10
Convinced=14
In all but one couple, both spouses had at least a college education. Three men and one woman had earned a Ph.D. One man had a law degree. Four women had at least one masters degree (see Table 2). Four participants were born and/or raised outside of the United States. Six participants were born and/or raised in Massachusetts. At the time of the interviews, all couples resided in Massachusetts.

Three men were retired at the time of the interviews. None of the women were retired. One woman had not worked for pay during her marriage, but participated in a range of community and Quaker organizations, and continued to do so. Half of the participants were teachers or retired teachers at the time of the interviews.

Recruitment of Participants

The researcher adopted several strategies to recruit couples for the study. She initially wrote letters of introduction to the Clerks of five meetings describing the study, and asking permission to visit each meeting to request participation (see Appendix A). A flyer designed for posting further describing the study was including in these mailings (see Appendix B). Meetings were identified by the researcher’s prior knowledge, and through meeting listings in the 1996 Minutes of the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends. After receiving a Clerk’s permission, the researcher made a verbal announcement of the purpose and requirements of study participation and potential benefits to participants at the designated announcement time at each of four meetings. The aforementioned flyer describing the study was posted in four meetinghouses (see Appendix B). The researcher took names and telephone numbers of volunteers and called each couple to arrange an interview time and to receive directions to their home. Five couples were identified in this manner.
Table 2

Education Level, Geographic Origin, and Field of Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Couple</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Geographic Origin</th>
<th>Field of Employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Arthur</td>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>NJ</td>
<td>Homemaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Artist/Writer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cal</td>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Historian/Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyd</td>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave</td>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Architect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drew</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed</td>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>WI</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eve</td>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fran</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg</td>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>Technical Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gail</td>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>Human Service Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hal</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Computer Programmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ike</td>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Teacher/Librarian</td>
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<td>Irene</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
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<td>ID</td>
<td>Teacher/Librarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joyce</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>Teacher/Librarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken</td>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>Scientist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>Teacher/Musician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lou</td>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Scientist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
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*All names are pseudonyms
The Clerk of the fifth meeting contacted referred the researcher to the meeting’s Administrative Secretary who offered to place an announcement describing the study in a newsletter mailed to current and former members and attenders. One couple was identified in this way. The researcher was also referred to the Clerk of the Marriage and Family Life Committee of this meeting. This individual was contacted by telephone, and agreed to present information about the study in the next meeting of the committee she clerks. Four couples were identified through this method.

After the close of the four meetings at which the researcher described the study, she was sometimes approached by Quakers not meeting the criteria for the study, but expressing interest in the results and offering names of potential participants. The researcher wrote letters to four couples identified in this way. These letters described the purpose of the study, what participation would entail, confidentiality and potential benefits to participants (see Appendix D). One week after these letters were mailed, the researcher contacted these potential participants by telephone. Of the four couples contacted in this manner, two agreed to participate. The other two couples declined citing reluctance to discuss their marriage at this time.

All participants were living in Eastern Massachusetts at the time of the interviews. The meetings with which they were associated are all part of the New England Yearly Meeting.

The Interview

All interviews took place between October 1997 and March 1998. The interviews were all conducted in couples’ homes allowing the researcher to gain further information about participants’ lifestyles. The researcher interviewed each spouse separately. A precedent was set for this method of interviewing by other researchers investigating marital quality and stability including Demmert, 1992; Podbelski, 1993; Kantor, 1993; Hamel, 1993; and Mengden, 1994. Each interview was recorded with a small audiotape recorder. Interviews lasted between one and two and one-half hours, with the average interview lasting one and one-half hours. An exception
to this time length was one interview which lasted approximately four hours. This interview was conducted over the course of two evenings. All remaining interviews were conducted with each spouse in one day or evening per couple.

At the beginning of each interview, the participant read and signed a consent form. This form stated the fact that the interviews were part of the researcher’s dissertation, the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of the study, confidentiality of all information given by the participant, and the format for the sharing of results (see Appendix D). The researcher answered any questions and encouraged participants to express any thoughts or concerns they may have had about the interview or the study. The researcher spent time at the beginning of each interview with the intention of establishing a trusting relationship and building rapport, attempting to maximize the comfort participants felt in discussing details of their marriage. As Glaser & Strauss (1967) pointed out, it is important for the researcher to maintain an attitude of “informed detachment” (p. 295). He or she must know enough about the culture into which he or she is entering to establish trust and to not be perceived as a complete outsider.

The researcher used a semi-structured interview based on that found in Mackey & O’Brien (1995) (See Appendix E). A brief description of the interview was given to each participant. This description noted that the interview would cover three phases of the participant’s marriage: As it was during pre-child rearing, child rearing, and post-child rearing years; the individual’s assessment of how the marriage has changed and/or stayed the same with regard to roles, expectations and needs over the three phases; the influence of family background and particular values on the marriage; the influence of the individual’s parents’ marriage with regard to relationship variables; and the individual’s assessment of important factors in the marriage over time. Additional questions were added focusing on the individual’s perception of the influence of Quakerism on his or her life and marriage. Demographic questions were asked prior to interview questions.
The researcher’s advanced clinical training and experience combined with the semi-structured interview format enabled her to ask probing questions, to facilitate open responses, and to offer supportive comments to participants. The researcher maintained a relaxed, open-ended style throughout each interview encouraging elaborated responses from the participants.

The majority of interviews proceeded smoothly and without interruption. On three occasions, participants asked for a short break when the tape was turned over. Another participant declined to answer a question regarding his income. In two instances, female participants began to weep when discussing their relationships with their husbands. In one case, the participant declined the researcher’s offer to turn off the tape recorder. In the second instance, the tape recorder was shut off on several occasions when the researcher asked and the participant agreed. Following this interview, the participant asked for advice with regard to a particular family problem. The researcher spent an additional hour following the interview to offer assistance with this problem, including a suggestion that the participant pursue individual psychotherapy. One couple requested a copy of the transcript of their interviews.

Following each interview, the researcher wrote down her reactions. Comments included the length of the interview, her feeling about rapport established, her feelings about the interview itself, significant issues that arose during the interview, and any other data perceived as important to the research.

Before and after each interview, the researcher thanked the participant for his or her interest and cooperation. At that time, the researcher mentioned two ways in which participants could obtain information about the results of the study: Either through a general presentation given by the researcher at the couple’s particular meeting, or through another home visit. All participants chose the former option.
Files

Given the large amount of information amassed in a qualitative study, organization is critical. For this reason, the researcher maintained a number of files which included:

Mundane Files: These were used to store all blank and completed forms used in the study. These included informed consent forms, introductory letters to meeting Clerks and potential participants, the flyer describing the study, forms for recording demographic information, coding sheets, and the semi-structured interview.

Interview Reaction Files: All of the researcher's written reactions to the interviews were stored in this file.

Interviews: Each interview was transcribed by the researcher, assigned a code name, and was kept in this file.

Discussion File: This file included any thoughts the researcher had during the study with regard to the implications of the findings, and areas for further investigation.

Analysis of the Data

Each of the 24 interviews was transcribed by the researcher. All interviews were coded for themes using a scoring system developed by O'Brien & Mackey (1990). Additional scoring measures were added to the system to rate the impact of Quakerism on the lives of individual participants and on their marriage (see Appendix F). To enhance the reliability of the findings, the researcher and a male counterpart independently coded the data, then met to discuss themes arising from the data. Areas of disagreement were discussed, and consensus was reached regarding scoring in all cases. Interrater reliability statistics were calculated for both portions of the system. These statistics were reached by calculating the percentage of items upon which both raters agreed prior to discussion of coding. For both the initial portion of the questionnaire and the nine items added to assess the impact of Quakerism on the lives of individuals and couples, interrater reliability based on percent agreement was .89. After all interviews were coded and
agreement was reached, the scoring was analyzed using SPSS software with the assistance of a fellow researcher, and frequencies were obtained. For the purpose of comparison, frequencies were also obtained from the studies on marital quality and stability conducted by Demmett, 1992, Podbelski, 1993, Kantor, 1993, Hamel, 1993, and Mengden, 1994. These studies used a research design similar to the method employed in this study. Themes were categorized using HyperRESEARCH software (ResearchWare, Inc., 1991). In this way, the researcher was able to organize specific passages from the interviews upon which these emerging themes were based. Data were then organized and analyzed by theme.

Statement of Subjectivity

When conducting qualitative research, the researcher's experience influences the process and direction of the research. To be aware of this influence, it is incumbent upon the researcher to be aware of his or her own values, biases and beliefs. The researcher kept process notes concerning these issues to assess their potential influence upon the data. Relevant information regarding the researcher is presented below:

I am 38 years old and was raised in a close family, the youngest child and only daughter of four children. Throughout my life I have spent significant time involved in family activities including going on family vacations, talking and visiting frequently with my parents and brothers, and celebrating Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter together. My parents were married for 45 years until the death of my father. My father was Catholic, and my mother is a member of the United Methodist Church. My brothers and I were raised in this church. Economically, my family would be considered middle class. My parents both graduated from high school, and did not attend college. They stressed the importance of academic achievement, and my siblings and I all have advanced degrees. My mother worked outside the home before I was born, and returned to work when I was 12 years old. I have been married for nine years to a man who grew up in the same town I did. He is Jewish, and our marriage ceremony was conducted by a Methodist Minister and a Cantor. My husband has a masters degree. His parents have been married for 48 years. We have no children. Growing up, I had limited familiarity with Quakerism. I stopped attending the Methodist Church or any other religious group following my graduation from high school. Following the death of my father, I began attending services in various Protestant churches in order to find a spiritual home. I have attended the Framingham Friends Meeting sporadically over the past three years. I am a member of the Library Committee and have served on the Maintenance Committee. I have attended two Friends' retreats, the aim of which were to foster a greater appreciation of nature, and to learn more about Quakerism. I am a psychotherapist and have worked with children, adolescents and adults individually and in
I have a particular interest in the impact of religion and spirituality on the thoughts and behavior of individuals and couples.

Based upon my familiarity with liberal Quakerism, my middle class upbringing, and my experiences of my own and my parents’ marriage, I developed a number of expectations regarding participants’ demographic characteristics and responses to interview questions. I expected that couples would value education highly, and that they would probably have at least a college education. I also expected that participants’ children have pursued, or were planning to pursue at least an undergraduate degree. I expected that teaching and physical sciences would be highly represented as occupations. I expected that most female participants have worked outside the home. I expected that most participants would describe themselves as being active in their respective meetings secondary to the means by which they were recruited. I expected that most participants would hold basic Quaker values of non-violence and simplicity in high esteem. I expected that male participants who were conscientious objectors during times of war, particularly World War II, would have experienced some discrimination. I expected that females would be more expressive than males. I expected that my involvement with Quakerism, my level of education, and my clinical skills would be factors that would assist participants in openly expressing their thoughts and feelings.
Chapter 4

Significant Themes

Introduction

In this chapter, ten primary themes are presented which relate to marital stability as identified in the interviews of 12 Quaker couples. Each of these couples was married for 20 years or more, and their youngest child was at least 18 years of age. The interviews were coded line by line so relevant themes could be identified. These themes are as follows: Religion and culture; gender equity; communication; conflict; roles; relatedness; decision making; intimacy; satisfaction with the relationship; and external factors. These themes and pertinent quotes from the transcribed interviews are presented in this chapter. Frequencies are provided for significant themes, and gender differences are identified when salient. Each spouse was assigned a pseudonym, and other potentially identifying information was changed to protect participants’ confidentiality.

Each interview was coded independently by the researcher and a male counterpart using the scoring system developed by O’Brien and Mackey (1990). Items related to Quakerism were added to this scoring system. There were 99 items in the original scoring system, and 17 items in the additional section. Agreement between raters, determined by dividing the number of identical judgements by the total number of codes, was 87%. 
Religion and Culture

Quaker conversion

Of the 12 couples interviewed, six were relationships in which both spouses were convinced rather than birthright Quakers. In two couples, one spouse was a convinced Friend, while the other was a birthright Quaker. The ways in which individuals became involved in Quakerism were varied, and reflect the individual nature of a spiritual journey. For some people, social activism was an initial attraction to Quakers. For others, association with Quakers influenced a decision to attend meetings for worship and become more involved with the Society of Friends.

Frank: One of the things that I think did attract me to Quakerism was in meeting these people, and how much of the religion of these people who professed to be Quakers was carried on in the day to day work. There was no dichotomy between what they did on Sunday, and what they did on Monday. And that’s where I wanted to be. I wanted to somehow be able to practice the tenets of my faith on an everyday basis. And Sunday could still be a special day, but I couldn’t contradict what I did the other days.

John: I had only a vague but positive attitude toward Quakers because members of my family were Quakers on my mother’s side. They go back a long way. But my mother and father were not active Quakers once they got married. My father didn’t come from a Quaker background. And we did not live close enough for me to observe the Quakers a lot. So my ideas were vague, but I liked them a lot. They were good people. But I didn’t really think to inquire or explore what their Quakerism meant to them. What prompted our movement toward Quakerism was in the 1960s, our own religious participation and the religious instruction our children were getting became less and less satisfying to us, so we were at loose ends about religion, and also at loose ends about the society in which
we lived because of the Vietnam War and the other attendant upheavals of the 1960s. But primarily because of the war, we began to think about attending a Quaker meeting because of our understanding of the Quakers' clear pacifist stance. And we wanted to hear more about that as a solution or a stance that would give us some stability or some way of coping with the upheavals that were around us. We were in our thirties, so we weren't youngsters by any means.

Fran: Frank was raised Jewish and I was raised Catholic. . . Someone suggested that he try Friends meeting. So he went to Friends meeting in Beacon Hill a few times, and hadn't gone back for a while. So when we met, we began talking about our philosophies, and we started going to Beacon Hill together. And immediately we both felt it was the right thing for us. Neither of us felt very good about the religion we were raised with. . . So we started attending Beacon Hill Friends Meeting. We more married in July and became members in January. So we were married under the care of Friends, but were not Quakers at the time. So it was six months later that we became Friends.

Cyd: I became an attender in the '60s. I fell in love with a Quaker at an impressionable age and found the faith that way. I was raised in the Church of England, baptized, and sporadically attended.

Many respondents discussed the fact that similarity of backgrounds, interests, and values were important in attracting them to their spouses. Religion and culture were inextricably linked to the decision to marry, and had implications for family support, and other issues important before marriage. Pre-marital issues are discussed in light of participants' involvement in Quakerism.
Initial attraction

Of the nine males who were either members or attenders of Quaker meeting at the time of their marriage, eight reported that the fact that their prospective wives were also members or attenders had a positive influence upon initial attraction. Six of the seven females who were members or attenders at the time of their marriage reported that the fact that their prospective husbands were members or attenders had a positive influence on initial attraction. All but three participants reported an overall positive initial attraction to their spouse-to-be. Of these three, two are married to each other and are birthright Quakers. Their Quakerism was a feature that was mutually attractive, but there were other factors causing them to indicate that their initial impression of each other was ambivalent. Another birthright Quaker female reported being ambivalent about her attraction to her birthright Quaker husband because of her ambivalence about becoming involved in a relationship at the time.

Gail: I would say from the beginning that I’ve always attended Friends meeting. I’m a convinced Friend, and always was a member of a meeting, and so has Greg, so that’s always been a presence. And our parents have been active in meeting or worked for the Service Committee or were very involved in social and peace action, and it was from a Quaker perspective. . . So I think that was one of the things that attracted me too.

Ken: Kim was at that time my sister’s roommate at the Quaker school we were attending. . . Later – I graduated two years ahead of my sister and Kim - and went to (college). My mother said, “Oh Ken, why don’t you come down and visit your sister and her roommates. She had two roommates. One of them my mother couldn’t stand. So ours was essentially an arranged marriage. I of course smelled a rat and stayed away and didn’t have anything to do with it.
Eve: Well, we were in this really small school and . . . I don't know that I was ever attracted to him in the sense that people say "attracted." I mean, I liked him and, you know, he was interesting to talk to.

Birthright Quakers who married other birthright Quakers frequently discussed the ease and comfort that arose from knowing their prospective spouse's family long before becoming romantically involved. Some couples also mentioned the importance of a shared value system.

Arthur: I think we were interested in the same things. Of course our families had known each other for a long time because they were Quakers, and also her mother's sister married my father's brother, so we had an aunt and uncle in common, and all of their children were our first cousins.

Greg: Well, we were both members of the same meeting in Delaware, and that was an undercurrent to our interests in politics. We had both been active in the 1972 McGovern campaign, and sort of post-campaign, we knew the same people. And certainly we shared the same political views. We were against the war in Vietnam. So there was a situation where we both shared a lot of interests and built on those interests. And that's how our relationship evolved.

Certainty about spouse prior to marriage

Six of 12 women and three of 12 men reported being uncertain about marriage. This uncertainty arose from several sources including general concern about getting married, and characteristics of the prospective spouse.
Drew: I don’t know. I don’t know that you’re ever 100% sure. I think that’s about the surest thing you can say, at least for me, that you’re never 100% sure, but it seems to be that that’s the thing to do.

Cyd: Well, I wasn’t at first, of course. Apart from having things in common, there were also things that I thought were important divisions – different nationalities, different countries that we were living in.

Lou: I wasn’t sure. I had great trepidation. Part of my makeup is to weigh all the possibilities in a situation. So my decision was quite carefully thought out, but I wasn’t completely sure.

Family support for partner choice

Eight of 12 females and 11 of 12 males reported that their families were supportive of their choice of a marriage partner. Although most respondents reported that parental disapproval would have made the marriage more difficult, no one indicated that this would have been a sufficient reason to call off the wedding. Among the four females whose parents were not initially supportive, reasons included age differences between partners, the parental impression that no partner would be good enough, religious differences, and lack of communication between the female and her parents. The one male whose parents did not initially approve of his marriage cited religious differences as the reason.

Arthur: I think they were very happy that I was marrying a Quaker. My brothers and sisters – none of them were particularly interested in Quakerism. But I was more or less active as a Quaker through college and law school. So they were just kind of hoping I would marry a Quaker rather than someone else who would not be interested in the things
that I was interested in. And of course they knew Anne’s family which make them more
comfortable with it.

Gail: They were absolutely delighted. They adored Greg. My parents, well, my mother
is dead now, but my parents think the world of him. And they’re right. They think he’s
intelligent, competent, and caring.

Ike: Oh! She was the best! She was ten years younger than I, but all my girlfriends were
somewhat younger than I was. But I think they spotted in Irene right away a person who
had good command of herself, and who would be a great daughter-in-law for them.

Cyd: A mistake. . . (My mother) said, “Why are you throwing away this wonderful job
and going over to marry somebody who’s old enough to be your father? Who has got a
family, who is about to divorce one wife. What makes you think he’s going to stay with
you?” You know, all those things that mothers think of that you don’t when you’re in
love with somebody. So she was quite justified. And she was very unhappy, and I had to
sort of deal with this and at the same time, I was quite certain that I wanted to marry Cal.

Expected effort

Eight of 12 females and five of 12 males reported expecting to have to work at their
marriages in order for them to succeed. One woman expressed pleasant surprise at not having to
work at her marriage, when she had thought that she would.

Cyd: Yes. It’s an interesting question. I always assumed one did. You know, people
always said you have to work at a marriage, and in fact, I had had a relationship at which
I had to work very hard and when it broke up, I thought, “Well, there’s just so much in
this. Can’t we keep it on somehow?” But with Cal, it was never any idea of working at this. No, everything seemed to be okay as far as he was concerned. At which I thought, “Don’t we have to work at this a bit more?” And I was surprised because it was so easy. It really was. That was a big plus I think. Not having to work at it, or be aware of working at it. You now, having to subordinate your own wants and needs, or even the food you like to somebody else’s needs or requirements. It was quite a surprise. It still is.

Quaker influence

All participants reported that Quakerism has had a positive influence upon their marriage. Ten of 12 women, and 11 of 12 men indicated that the Quaker community has or had a positive influence on their lives.

Ben: The Quaker concept of “that of God in every person” to me makes a lot more sense than almost anything else that Quakers do. Well, let me say that another way. From that belief springs most of the actions that Quakers take as their credo. All of social concerns of Quakers come from the idea that there is that of God in every person – the peace concerns, equality, the taking of lives, all those other things. And that influences the way that I can look at other people and relate to them.

Gail: Well, if I believe in the light and that of God, even if I’m in profound disagreement with Greg, I still have faith in that light in the other person. So my faith helps me to get beyond my own stuff so I can be available for that and to look for that. I oftentimes read [Quaker] pamphlets or go to conferences, and I wait and listen, and I’m usually pretty consistently informed as a result of that. I would not say it’s a daily presence, but it is a presence. For years I taught First Day School when the boys were in it. There may be a
period of a couple of months that I don’t go to meeting, but I’m a fairly regular presence. I sometimes go not because I feel called, but because it’s a form of discipline.

Joyce: We spend a great deal of our time around the meeting. We’re very active in the meeting. We go to a lot of special programs and meetings that they have. I’ve been on Ministry and Counsel, John’s on Ministry and Counsel now. I’m on Membership Committee, and I’ve been on pretty much every committee they have. We’ve both taught Sunday School. It’s one of the focuses of our lives actually.

Kim: I think for us it’s been more of an influence in the way we live our lives. It’s the way we grew up. I think the idea of that of God in everyone is something that I try to live by.

Ed: I can’t imagine us together in any shape, way, or form without that as a means of understanding ourselves and the world. I can’t imagine it. It’s partly because Quakerism has to do with experience. It’s really a day to day kind of thing. It’s not something that you sort of settle at one point or refer to on a particular holiday or anything like that. There are no holidays. Well, there are all the holidays, but the holidays are a very different thing for Quakers. Every day is a holy day, and every place is. There aren’t just certain places where there’s real spirit. It’s with us always. So when you have that, it’s just very different. So for me to be with someone who didn’t understand that... I don’t know, I just can’t picture it. Just the whole idea of nonviolence and how people treat each other. It’s such a day to day thing. It’s always there.
Discrimination

Two of 12 females, and one of 12 males indicate that they have experienced discrimination because of their Quakerism.

Ben: Not overtly hostile actions against me, no. But it’s... I don’t go around with a sign around my neck saying I’m a Quaker. If it comes up and people know for the first time, for most people it’s an unknown. And because it’s an unknown, at first they’re suspicious of it. Most people, well, it’s not good to make generalizations, but I’ll give you some because they’re handy. I think for most people Quaker, Shaker, Holy Roller – it’s all the same to them. So it’s one of those weird, little extreme groups that he belongs to, so he must be weird and extreme. Again, that’s an overgeneralization.

Eve: Well, as a child I certainly did. During the war. Heavy duty... I was living in Wichita, Kansas, and it was during the war. And we were against the war. That situation was that you were supposed to bring your dimes to school and buy war bonds. And participation was supposed to be 100%. Our rooms were never 100%, so we weren’t very popular. It was horrible actually. I didn’t want to go to school. The kids would throw stones at us. It was bad.

Gender equity

Eleven of 12 females, and 11 of 12 males reported that gender equality has been evident throughout their marriages. This concept was expressed in the efforts of couples to avoid power struggles regarding various tasks and responsibilities. While there often had been a traditional division of labor, it appeared that spouses generally did not view one role as more powerful or important than another.
Beth: I think, frankly, that Quakerism does more for the equalization of the sexes than any other church going because when it started even, they had that feel to it. Both sexes could equally participate. There wasn’t that male super image so to speak. And that has placed it way ahead of all the other churches going in some respects . . . That aspect, plus the nonviolent one is a major difference in an institution that calls itself a church or a meeting or something.

Ike: I think I had in the back of my mind that I would support Irene. That I would be the wage earner, and she would do the dishes and take care of the home. That rapidly changed . . . As it as turned out, the agreement was made that she would cook and I would do the dishes. That seemed fair. And I sort of have a native propensity for neatness and cleaning up anyway. So it all worked out. It wasn’t the masculine thing to do at the time, but to keep the peace and to keep Irene happy, it did seem right that I do this, and it was not a comfortable thing to exercise any kind of masculinity anyway like the husband versus the wife and that sort of thing. You do what you are strong in. What you can do. And, as it’s turned out, Irene earns twice the salary I earn now, and she works the longer hours.

Cyd: We cross all kinds of boundaries. It’s very interesting . . . I remember that when I was getting my MBA I was taking a course where we had to write our autobiographies and career stories. Talking about roles in the house – what we did. And one person said, “Well I shovel the snow and I take out the garbage.” And I said, “You mean she doesn’t help you?” And he said, “Oh no no.” You know, a macho thing. And the instructor said to me, “Well, how do you manage this?” And I said, “We each have a snow shovel, and I start at the garage, and he starts further out, and we work towards each other.” They all sort of fell about. He said, “But doesn’t your husband insist on shoveling snow?” I said,
“Well, no. I'd feel really wrong if he was out in the cold shoveling and I was inside warm and watching.” . . . So there haven't been all these roles that assume all of your time and attention. It's much easier. Much more fluid. I tend the garden for instance. Cal mows the grass, but I do the digging.

**Communication**

Fifteen individuals identified their communication as mixed or poor in the beginning of their marriage, while nine reported good communication at this time. This assessment remained similar during the child rearing years with two individuals changing their opinion from good to poor or mixed. Communication improved slightly from the child rearing years to the empty-nest years of marriage: Ten reported that the communication at that time was positive, while 14 said that communication was either poor or mixed. Several participants described some difficulty in getting accustomed to the style of his or her spouse.

Beth: I may not have expected it, but there's a lot of difference between being married and dating on weekends even if you do know each other for many years. . . And he was very quiet and I sometimes got upset. He was something or other and there was no sense in asking him about it because he wouldn't respond very well to something. So I used to write letters to him.

Ed: Well, I think there were times that I didn't understand what Eve was feeling, and sometimes I think she didn't know what she was feeling. She wasn't used to being allowed to have feelings.
Frank: There have been some rough patches. I guess that the hardest part for me is trying to understand what she wants. But I think I’ve found a few devices that help me figure some of that out, or at least what I need to know.

Four couples noted that it is easier for them to communicate about topics external to the relationship than it is to talk about the relationship itself. During child rearing, one man and one woman described a decline in the quality of their communication. Avoiding anger and other strong emotions was mentioned by five participants as a barrier to communication.

Gail: It depends on what the subject matter is. The closer we get to talking about our own intimacy – the deepening of our own intimacy – the more indirect it becomes. The more difficult it becomes.

Hope: I think it was a lot better in the beginning. I notice the difference. I think the impact of Charles has had a major impact on us. . . I think that was when we became more selfish. Our needs were greater and were weren’t as considerate to the extreme almost that we had been before.

Greg: . . . I think communicating is one important thing and that’s communicating emotionally as well as just on a mundane level. It’s something that I’m not very skilled at, so that’s been a problem in our relationship.

Joyce: . . . Neither one of us is very good at expressing anger, and we’ve had to work on that. We still don’t do a very good job. We both avoid it. In other words, we’d rather avoid a subject that’s unpleasant or would make the other person unhappy rather than say it.
Three participants reported their communication as positive throughout the course of their marriages.

Arthur: I don’t think we ever had a problem telling each other how we felt, and I don’t remember any big arguments.

Cyd: I can say anything I think. I don’t think one thing and say another. There’s no break. I think something and say it, it’s accepted and responded to. It’s very extraordinary.

Conflict

Participants’ approach to conflict remained consistent during the three phases of marriage. Eight men reported that they avoided conflict throughout, and four men indicated that their wives avoided conflict throughout. One man indicated that his wife avoided conflict in the first phase of their marriage. Among the women, three said that they avoided conflict throughout their marriage, and six indicated that their husbands avoided conflict throughout. One woman said that she tended to avoid conflict during the first and second phases of her marriage. The same woman reported that her husband also avoided conflict during those phases. There was considerable agreement upon how spouses rated each other with regard to conflict avoidance or confrontation.

Dave: I guess one of the things that affected me was a real sense of the danger of confrontation. That if there is argument and confrontation, the world is going to come apart.
Anne: I guess I just subsided in my opposition. I actually think that he is more likely to
lie down in front of opposition, and it makes me kind of mad at times.

Fran: Well, my original way of solving problems was to avoid them and not really talk.
That didn’t work out, so we had to learn to communicate better. Him to do less assuming
and me to do more communicating.

Hope: Not that we haven’t had conflict. But there’s always been that openness to make
it work or work through it.

In the early phase of marriage, 21 of 24 respondents indicated that there was a low level
of marital conflict. In the second and third phases, seven respondents reported major marital
conflict. Disagreements regarding child rearing and money were the most oft-cited reasons for
increased conflict.

Roles
Compatibility

All 24 participants indicated they had a complementary style of relating to their spouses
during the beginning, child rearing, and post-child rearing years. This style is characterized by
spouses offsetting each other’s behavior and personality types. For example, if one spouse tended
to be more outgoing, the other would be more withdrawn. These complementary styles are
illustrated in their marital behavior and emotional responses to each other, in their marital
behavior, and in the division of tasks including child rearing.

Hope: I’m not a person who can keep stuff in. If there’s a problem, I need to discuss it.
And I think that’s a lot harder for him because he came from a family that’s much tighter
emotionally. He has a father and two brothers, and none of them are expressive emotionally.

Irene: I appreciate how he complements me. He’s very organized, he’s very neat. I mean, he really makes our lives run smoothly in ways that are important. And I do too.

Ken: I’m an engineer. And that colors my thinking. I like experiments that are repeatable. If the results are not repeatable, then I say that I don’t know what you’ve got. I think she goes more on intuition.

Ben: We’re different people from each other. I’m very quiet and reserved and non-talkative. Beth is an outgoing, verbal, and gregarious type of person. But we knew that about each other all along. Although we’re different, there’s a complement to each other there.

Seven of 12 males and eight of 12 females expected to adopt traditional roles of either breadwinner or homemaker respectively. All women were either employed or were students at the time of their marriage. Six expected to take time off to raise children and then return to work. At the time of these interviews, all but one woman was working outside the home. Of those
males who expected to assume a non-traditional role, three reported that they believed that they would assume a significant responsibility for maintaining the home as well as for earning money. These men tended to be younger than those expecting to take on a more traditional role, and also tended to have fathers who did household tasks.

Greg: Well, we were both working. We both expected to continue working and share the responsibilities.

Hal: We viewed coming into it as partners and trying to figure out how to work together to do the various chores but also how to come together to be supportive of one another in a marriage. To try and work things out on an equal level. Not as the husband gives orders and the wife obeys, but working together as partners.

Child rearing

With regard to child rearing, three of 12 males and four of 12 females believed that this was a mutual responsibility whether children were infants, in the latency years, or adolescents. Of the remaining respondents, ten of 24 believed that child rearing is primarily an individual responsibility of the mother during infancy. As children got older, fathers perceived themselves as more willing and able to become involved in the care of their children. Twenty-one of 24 respondents regarded caring for adolescent children as a mutual responsibility.

Lou: I didn’t really take care of the kids at first at all. I was either at work or just “there.” Later on I began to realize what I was missing and started to pay more attention. Now I’d say I’m pretty involved in our daughters’ lives.
Gail: I was much more involved when the kids were younger, but Greg became very
involved when the children entered high school.

Four participants, both male and female, who had intended to take on traditional roles
found this difficult to manage for practical and financial reasons.

Hal: It’s still an interesting situation trying to be partners when I’m the one earning the
money, and she’s the one taking care of Henry. Because it’s the traditional roles, and it’s
not as easy to have equality of experience or even understand the experiences of the other
as it’s going on.

Fran: Well, all I’ve ever wanted to be in the whole world, and it’s sad to say but it’s true,
is a mom. And it’s what I’m really good at. So I guess the vision I would have had for
myself would have been as a very traditional wife and mother. But it didn’t really work
out that way, because I always worked.

Hope: We went into it thinking that we were going to do things in an equitable way. At
first we were both going to cook dinner, and we tried doing that for a few weeks. It
became clear that cooking came more easily to me than to him, so we worked it out that I
would cook and he would clean up. We both did cleaning. We both had had fathers who
did cleaning so that was not an issue.

Six couples cited child rearing as an area of considerable disagreement. Nine individuals
discussed the pivotal role family activities played in their lives.
John: I would say we had more serious disagreement about raising the children and how to go about doing that, than any other single issue... We really felt that we should have a consistent view, but we didn't always have a consistent view, and I think the kids knew we didn't.

Joyce: One of the things that our children have mentioned that happened when they were little and would do something wrong. John would come home and I would tell him and then he'd say, "What do you want me to do?" And I'd say, "Well, talk to them about it." And the kids would say that he'd go downstairs and try to sound angry, and they'd laugh because he can't get angry.

Hope: It was a battle... I was much more convinced of the importance of Henry's going to Friends School which was a pretty major sacrifice.

Irene: We definitely had conflict around our children... And how much to help them as young adults.

Anne: I found a paper written by my oldest son when he was in the fourth grade. He talked about things that he did with his father, and I'm so glad he did that. He said that his father, well in addition to transportation and money, would take him mountain climbing and would help him build things.

Drew: He always had a hobby going, and they could participate with that... He was willing to share all his things and show them how to do things.
Relatedness

Three individuals experienced a difficult adjustment phase when first married, but all had positive or mixed feelings toward his or her spouse during this phase. They described getting along well and having fun.

Cal: She has a marvelous memory for poetry and lines from Shakespeare plays and is full of English culture. It’s remarkable, you know, at the drop of a hat there’s a line or two lines from I don’t know what poetry. She’s very well-read. Very cultured. Plays, theater, she likes music and has an incredible resource, vitality, that’s wonderful. She has a cheerful disposition. She knows how to be lovely and loving.

Fran: I did things that I had always wanted to do. Like go to the ballet and to lots of movies and restaurants and things like that that took me out of the sort of narrow sphere I was in when we met.

During child rearing and post-child rearing, there was a slight shift among the 24 participants from a positive sense of relatedness to feeling less connected with his or her spouse. Nineteen individuals reported having positive feelings toward his or her spouse during these two phases of marriage. One person expressed a feeling of disillusionment with his wife, while others discussed the demands of careers and child care as reasons for the shift.

Frank: I think I really sort of expected someone to be a little more my peer as far as the action and the quest for success kind of thing.

Eve: I just felt really alone in raising the kids. I don’t know that we ever really talked about it.
Linda: I think the hardest time was when our kids were little. You know, Lou would go off to work, and I would have to handle all the child responsibility plus my job. There wasn’t much sharing of responsibility.

Respect

All respondents reported feeling respect for his or her spouse, and 23 believed that his or her spouse gave respect in return. One man expressed uncertainty about whether or not his wife respected his accomplishments.

Cal: I have incredible, unlimited respect for her. I tell her every moment day and night whenever she does something, “You’re wonderful, you’re wonderful.” So I think she has resources that I don’t have myself and admire very much. So I respect her without limits. And as for me, she knows I’m sloppy and I make mistakes and I’m getting old and I need looking after. But that’s secondary. And as I say, she mothers me and that means she respects me as I am.

Beth: I think we both have respect for each other. He’s always worked hard, and tried hard. He was really good in school working with kids – really super.

Ike: I can’t see that she would respect me for not being able to show up on time for things or not to be able to have some big project that many men we all respect do have like writing a book or building a house, or going to school and taking adult ed. classes or whatever. I’m unable to get off the ground on some of these things.
Understanding

Six of 12 women and five of 12 men reported some difficulty with his or her spouse’s ability to understand him or her during at least one phase of the marriage. For three women and all five men, this perceived lack of understanding carried through all three phases of marriage.

Irene: I’m not sure that we really understand each other well. That’s a funny thing to say after all these years. But I think we’re really different in some ways.

Frank: I sometimes think I listen to her more than what she listens to me. Do I want to be understood? I don’t know. She’s affectionate and caring. I don’t really know.

Ike: I’m not sure if she’s fully conscious of how alone I was in the hospital when I was young. I was four years in a hospital and only one visit a month from my mother and no visits from my father because he had tuberculosis... And that has some effect I know in the long run on a child.

Ed: Oh, I think she understands me pretty well. But I guess I always keep surprising her, so that’s good too.

Sensitivity

Ten men and seven women regarded their spouses as sensitive to their needs. There was little change in this feeling over the three stages of marriage. One woman described herself as being less sensitive to her husband’s needs since he retired. Two couples noted the difference between recognizing the need to act with sensitivity and actual sensitive behavior.
Hope: He does pretty well. In terms if I have a problem and his sensing in terms of where I am with it I’d say we both pretty much unconsciously are checking in on where the other one is. Not that we necessarily like it. But we’re aware of it most of the time.

Anne: I’m finding it kind of tough since he’s retired. . . I always kind of liked being around the house by myself during the day. I don’t like. . . Well, it’s really taken a lot of getting used to.

Irene: I think we’re very aware. . . I’m very aware of how he’s feeling. And I think he’s very aware of how I’m feeling. But I think sometimes we choose to ignore that.

Trust

All but three individuals felt that they could trust, and were trusted by their spouse throughout the three phases of marriage. Two women said that they were reluctant to share certain information with their husbands because they feared that this information would not remain confidential.

Hal: A great deal of trust. I think we have a strong relationship and she knows me and us well enough to understand what’s best for us as well as what’s best for her.

Drew: Saying things I don’t trust him completely not talk about it, so I usually preface it by saying, “Now don’t you say anything about this.” And that’s I suppose when it concerns other people. And as I say, he wouldn’t intend to, but he gets carried away sometimes with telling a good story. So in that I don’t have complete trust, but almost.
Individual decision making styles did not vary widely with 20 respondents describing their decision making style as logical in the second two phases of marriage. Of the four people who described their decision making process as intuitive or impulsive, three were women. Five couples described their decision making styles as complementary, and in general, women reported wanting to discuss the decision making process more than did their husbands.

Gail: Well, how would you describe the difference between a clinician and an engineer? Greg likes to line everything up, get all the information, put it in its appropriate category and weigh the difference. I go on feelings, I go on intuition, I go on the facts I know, and I go on the options I will allow myself to consider.

Hal: The difference between a programmer and an artist. I tend to approach it more logically and break it down step by step. Hope will look at the overall picture and take it in and go on what seems right.

Lou: I think we do it in a way that uses our complementary skills. She’s much better at sensing how people are feeling and that kind of thing. So in decisions involving people, I tend to follow her lead. But if there’s a quantifiable element involved, I would be more likely to take the lead.

Drew: I think I talk more about it than he does. And I talk to other people sometimes, but not too much about problems.

All respondents said that they were likely to make decisions in a mutual or variable manner rather than individually. There was a universal feeling that decision making is a process in which both members of the couple need to be involved.
Lou: We talked about them, sometimes we fought about them. Eventually we sort of divided up responsibilities. But decisions that involved us both, we discussed.

Ike: Family decisions I think are no problem. I try not to do anything unilaterally.

Fran: We've always been able to come up with solutions to problems. Sometimes we had to go a roundabout way to get there, but we have.

Intimacy

Psychosocial intimacy

During the first and third phases of marriage, 16 participants noted the presence of psychosocial intimacy in their marital relationship, and eight participants (four women and four men, none of whom were married to each other) indicated that psychosocial intimacy was partially lacking. During the child rearing phase, one woman reported a decline in psychosocial intimacy because of her husband’s involvement in his career to the detriment of their home life. This decline was resolved in the post-child rearing phase.

Cal: It’s been marvelous all along. I think she would agree with me. It’s gotten better and better in some ways. . . But it’s here (points to heart), that unspeakable element that comes across in the real love.

Anne: I don’t always tell him how I feel, and I don’t think he’s always told me how he feels.
Greg: Gail expects more sort of emotional communication and it hasn’t been there. So that’s one of the things I’m dealing with.

Physical intimacy

Four of 12 women reported having a positive sexual relationship with their husbands throughout the three phases of marriage. Seven of 12 men reported having a positive sexual relationship with their wives throughout their marriage. The number of respondents who described their sexual relationship as positive declined from 18 in the initial stage of marriage, to 16 in the child rearing phase, to 11 in the post-child rearing phase. From the initial stage of marriage onward, six individuals (four women and two men) regarded their sexual relationship as not important. Two of these six individuals were married to each other. Some of these individuals noted that they didn’t have a high sex drive, while others cited aging as a reason for decreased satisfaction with, and emphasis on, sexual relations. More women than men expressed disappointment at the lack of sexual relations.

Ben: We both seem quite satisfied with what we’re doing. Our sexual appetites are not as high as what you see on TV or movies. We seem quite content with each other.

Eve: It hasn’t been a big thing. Either one way or another. I think it’s been a bigger thing for Ed than for me. But we haven’t really addressed it.

Cal: Well, we loved sex. If you’re in love, it’s a matter of body as well as soul. Sex without soul, without love, is despicable. But there’s love there. And as I say that’s the way God created us. So we enjoyed sex while we were capable of it, and at the end, I got
too old, and after menopause on her part, it wasn’t quite right either. So we dispensed with it.

Anne: I would say it was perfectly okay. Although he had his problems later on in our life, and that was kind of disappointing. That was when he was pretty well along. And we don’t do anything now. We still sleep in the same bed, but he goes to bed much earlier than I do, and gets up earlier than I do.

Beth: Fine in the early years. He had some problems when he was on high blood pressure pills and so on. Now I must admit it’s nil, but what are you going to do? That’s the way it is.

With regard to non-sexual touching, there was an even division between the number of respondents who enjoyed this type of intimacy and those who did not. Five of 12 women and six of 12 men reported a consistent interest in activities such as hugging, kissing, and other non-sexual touching throughout their marriages. One male indicated that this part of his relationship with his wife became more satisfying in the post-child rearing years, while one female reported that, while non-sexual touching had been important in the early years of marriage, it became less so during the child bearing and post-child bearing years.

Anne: Well you know, I got the impression that if we didn’t have sex, he didn’t know how much I’d like to be hugged. He always kisses me dutifully at night, and I kiss him when I come down in the morning. It’s sort of routine. I wish he would do more hugging and stuff. Maybe I should tell him. I always got the impression that that he wasn’t interested in hugging unless we had sex.
Eve: We’re very close physically. And like to be very close physically, but I don’t think we’re very into sexual activities.

Dave: Not much. She’s not a hand-holder. She’s accustomed to hugging, but she’s not a natural hugger, where I think the kids are huggers and so on. But that’s not part of the way she was put together.

Hal: Yes, quite a bit. At this point it’s not always necessarily intentional. We can be sitting here on the couch watching TV and all of a sudden realize we’re holding hands. It’s not something planned – we’re just touching one another.

**Satisfaction with the relationship**

Eight of 12 women reported that they had an overall sense of satisfaction with their relationship throughout their marriage. One woman indicated that her sense of satisfaction was mixed throughout. Two women experienced a decline in satisfaction from the first two stages of marriage in the post child-rearing years. One described the current state of her relationship as “companionship.”

Cyd: It’s been an extraordinarily happy marriage. And there’s been nothing bad.

Irene: Ike really, he’s sort of the light at the end of the day, every day. And he makes every day worth it. There are times when I absolutely love being alone in my house without Ike being here, but really only for short times. I realized that the reason I enjoy being alone, is because I’m not going to be alone. He means everything to me.
Drew: Well, I suppose it’s been more up than down, and that’s good. There have been ups and downs, but more up than down. And we haven’t had a problem that we couldn’t resolve as far as I know.

Among the males, ten of 12 indicated that they have been satisfied throughout the course of their marriages. Two males suggested that their satisfaction was inconsistent or “mixed.”

John: I think we have a strong sense of partnership and a lot of unspoken strength and a lot of unspoken affection, and we know we can depend on each other. So it seems to me that without consciously working on it, we were working on it. I find it very hard to define. If someone were to ask me if I were happy in my marriage, I would say yes. If they asked me how come, I wouldn’t know what to say. Because it’s a good marriage, but I wouldn’t be able to define it in specific areas of good and bad.

Lou: It’s been good because I can rely absolutely on Linda to be strong, intelligent, and have good judgment. And I think she can rely on me in the same ways. So we make a good team. And what’s also been good is that we have fun doing it. We generally enjoy doing lots of the same things and have a fun time.

Greg: She’s my best friend and the central person in my life and has been for over 22 years. She’s very much the partner I hoped I would be able to find. We’re partners.

While relationship factors such as sensitivity, trust, understanding, and respect have remained consistent for most couples, life circumstances including aging and the implications of children leaving home were mentioned as significant changes by many.
Beth: I think when you have children, the household is very busy. And I always worked more or less, and Ben was in school. So it was busy and there was always someone around. Now it's changed in some respects because Ben's retired and I'm still working, but I'm home a lot. We don't have any animals at the moment, which I don't like. We've got to get something going that way. We're older and creakier maybe. What are you going to do about it?

Cal: I'm not sure, but I would say as I get older, she is having more influence. She is more essential in a way and she assumes more responsibility for what has to be done. What clothes I wear and such matters. And she is the one who gives me a haircut every once in a while and her share of responsibility in this marriage has increased in the last couple of years, and increases as I get older... I'm at the moment 81 and a half. So that's a problem for the future, and she's aware of it. It's not a personal charge against me. It's something that's the nature of things and we have to deal with it, and the basic affection, the love still endures.

Eve: Recently I've been trying to think a lot about what I really want to do, because the situation with the children is changing. I have not thought about what I wanted to do for a lot of the time and so I've been trying to force myself to do that. It's hard for me to focus on and find. It's an interesting exercise.

**Commitment**

Commitment was a critical value espoused by almost all participants. Many noted that commitment plays and has played a major role in keeping their marriages together especially during difficult times. Three couples described their distress as the marriages of friends and family members failed.
Eve: Ed is a really good person. And it was a period of time when nobody talked about things to do to build a relationship. Even in the peer counseling thing all of the sort of thrust was take care of yourself, take care of yourself, take care of yourself. And I always thought, “Yeah, but you’re in a relationship with someone.” And now you see stuff about relationships and what makes them work. There really wasn’t anything focused on that.

Frank: One of the things that left me sort of shattered that had to do with marriage and divorce was from when we first had our children. We became friends with two other couples. But like three or four times a year we’d all get together and spend the evening and it was wonderful just talking and watching our kids grow up together. And as other couples we knew fell away and divorced, there was more of a sense that these three families shared something special. Anyway, at some point one of the wives fell in love with someone else who she eventually married. I went into a depression around that. It was like these three families were somehow invincible to that point – that we could sustain each other somehow. That was a real shock. I just cried. I couldn’t understand it.

John: I guess I’m always impressed with marriage vows in whatever tradition they’ve arisen. One of the things about a Quaker wedding is that the couple can write their own vows of course. But I’ve always been struck by the idea of marrying for better or for worse and in sickness and in health. That kind of promise. Although we make it when we’re very young and don’t know what that’s going to mean. It’s still great stuff, and I think that’s as useful as anything in thinking about a marriage that’s going to be satisfying and meaningful.
When asked about the factors keeping their marriages together, in addition to commitment, respondents mentioned a shared history, common values, a desire to work through problems, and happiness in the company of his or her spouse.

Anne: I think the fact that he expects me to stick with it. And that we have this great business of shared history. I mean, now we’ve been married for 53 years, and there’s an awful lot of life that’s been lived in all that time, and we’ve lived it together so we have common memories, common interests, and common history.

Fran: Having common values, common goals for the most part, although they have changed and ebbed and flowed over the years, there’s sort of a basic core of values. Family, and working for being good citizens and trying to work for a better world.

Hal: I think similarity of backgrounds, support from family, common interests. We do different activities, but (we) are interested in music and politics, (and) seeing the world as a better place.

Linda: I think his assumption that we’re both in it for the long haul. His willingness to talk things over. Lou’s mother told me before we got married that he would “wear well.” I think he’s certainly worn well. We enjoy doing things together.

John: Certainly a mutual commitment to our marriage and our children. And a willingness to move forward regardless of what problems might arise. That’s fortitude and determination and trustworthiness.
Irene: I appreciate how he complements me. He’s very organized, he’s very neat. I mean, he really makes our lives run smoothly in ways that are important. And I do too. So that’s really a practical thing – that we realized that we make life better for each other. We never run out of things to say. We just enjoy being together.

**External factors**

External factors contributing to marital quality and stability include family background, including the effect of partners’ extended families on the marriage; similarities and differences between respondents’ marriages and those of their parents; parental attitudes toward divorce; attitudes toward money; and crises. These factors are addressed in the following section.

**Extended family**

Participants varied widely in their perceptions of the influence of their own extended families upon their marriages. During the first phase of marriage, ten of 24 respondents indicated that their families had a positive influence. Five reported that their families had no influence, and nine suggested that their families had a negative or mixed influence. There was little change during the second and third phases of marriage, except for a slight tendency for extended families to have less influence with the passage of time. Two of 12 males believed that their families have had a positive effect on their marriage throughout its duration. One man indicated that his extended family had a positive effect on his marriage during the first two phases, and a mixed effect during the empty-nest years. Two males reported that their extended families had no influence on their marriage. One man indicated that his extended family had a negative impact upon his marriage. The other six males asserted that their extended families had a mixed impact on their marriages in all three phases.
Ed: We’re very removed from our families. Our parents are dead, and our siblings are on the other side of the country, so that’s been hard at some points, although there are some benefits.

Greg: Certainly some of the health issues our families have had and their personal issues are things that have diverted our attention from time to time. Certainly a lot of turmoil which has spilled over into our relationship. We’ve done a lot of commuting back and forth between here and Delaware. And occasionally some of the family comes to visit here, but not very often... My parents haven’t been in any shape to come visit us, and haven’t been here in a number of years. So that’s certainly had an effect on our relationship.

Hal: Sometimes Mom’s hard to get along with because she was on the debate team in high school and tends to like a strong intellectual argument. At times, that comes across as her wanting to dominate the situation. And sometimes she does dominate the situation.

Ken: When my mother had some inkling that we were really getting serious, she panicked and said, “Oh my God, do you really want to get serious?” Then she calmed down and realized that this was really a pretty good match. My mother was quite bossy. We are what our families made us. I think that they’ve had both positive and negative effects because we all have our strengths and foibles that in large part result from our upbringings.

Among the women, seven of 12 indicated that their extended families have had a positive effect throughout the three phases of their marriage. One female reported that her family had a
negative impact when she was considering marriage, and no influence thereafter. Another
indicated that the influence of her extended family was mixed during the three stages of her
marriage. The remaining three women suggested that their extended families had no influence
upon their marriages.

Beth: I would say positive, supportive, and nothing negative. . . My dad died a couple
years after we were married. He had severe diabetes, and that prompted a heart attack.
Then my mother got along fairly well for a while, ’til she got to be about 75. Then
Mother established residence with us. . . where she lived for some time until she moved
to an elderly residence. She was there for 22 years, and was really happy there. She had
support from my brother and myself. And about support, I think it’s a mutual, caring
kind of thing.

Cyd: (My job) was high-powered and important, and I probably earned twice as much as
(my mother) had in her entire lifetime every year. And she said, “Why are you throwing
away this wonderful job and going over to marry somebody who’s old enough to be your
father?” You know, who has got a family, who was about to divorce one wife. “What
makes you think he’s going to stay with you?” You know, all those things that mothers
think of that you don’t when you’re in love with somebody. So she was quite justified.
And she was very unhappy, and I had to sort of deal with this, and at the same time, I was
quite certain that I wanted to marry Cal.

Drew: I don’t really know how they felt about Dave because they’re in England and I’m
here. We used to write letters. They didn’t seem to feel. . . I don’t know how they felt. . .
We’re not a very communicative family in that way. . . They accepted it I suppose. My
mother is not one for approving or disapproving which is good in a way because you do
things and don't fear that she's going to disapprove or approve. She takes in all in her stride as you might say.

When assessing the impact of their spouses’ extended family on their marriage, 13 of 24 respondents indicated that they had a positive effect during the first and second phases of marriage. The number of participants suggesting that their spouse’s extended family had no influence on their marriage was five of 24 in the first stage of marriage, and four in the second two phases. The number of people indicating that their spouse’s extended family had a negative effect on their marriage was six of 24 in the first phase of marriage, seven in the second phase, and eight in the third phase.

Five female participants and eight male participants reported that their spouse’s family had a positive effect during the three phases of their marriage. Two females and two males indicated that their spouse’s family had no effect on their marriage throughout its course. One woman and one male (unmarried to each other) reported that their spouse’s extended family had a negative impact upon their marriage during all three phases. One woman reported a negative influence during the first two phases, and a mixed influence during the empty-nest years. Another described no influence in the first phase, a negative influence in the second phase, and a positive influence in the third phase. A negative influence was described by another female in the first two phases of marriage with a positive influence in the third phase. Another suggested the reverse: A positive influence in the first two phases of marriage and a negative influence in the third phase. One male indicated that his spouse’s extended family had a mixed influence upon his marriage throughout its course.

Frank: As I look back, I think I also married her family, and they’re a terrific family. . .

The rule was you celebrate people while they’re alive. You do what you can do because it’ll be so much better when they die. Because you won’t feel like the only reason you’ve
gotten people around is to mourn somebody, when you want to do it to celebrate them... In fact, when we were looking over the brink of divorce, I thought if I could never be with these people again, that would be terrible.

Drew: Dave’s... mother was living in Boston, and she caused a little friction in the marriage from my point of view. ... Because there were all sorts of strange things I felt that she did or didn’t do. And she lived with us for a while after she had had a stroke and... Ah, once you start talking about things, you begin to think things again. I haven’t thought about that. I finally said to Dave, and I don’t know if I meant it or not, “Either your mother goes or I’ll go.” And he got more assertive and found a nursing home placement for his mother. And she did finally go to a nursing home. It seems to me she caused friction with the kids, and with me, and with Dave.

Fran: ... I never felt comfortable with his mother and father. They were nice to me, but they had a lot of stereotypes too. They couldn’t believe I didn’t drink. They thought that all people of Irish Catholic extraction drank too much, and they were forever offering me drinks, and I don’t know why, because they weren’t big drinkers either.

Irene: Ike’s parents are dead now. But they lived in (our town) and they were very careful not to be intrusive. We’ve lived in this house since we were married, and my mother-in-law could have been over here, dropping in unexpectedly or hovering, and she was never like that. They were not critical. They did not make disparaging remarks.

Lou: Linda’s mother was a gem, and there was no stress there. Linda’s sisters came to her with their problems, and sometimes they required minor sacrifices, but nothing major.
Linda had moderate financial resources of her own, so that gave her more freedom to help her sisters in the way that she wanted to without affecting our total family resources.

Similarity of parents’ marriage

When asked about similarities and differences between their marriages and the marriages of their parents, five of 12 men, and six of 12 women reported that there are features both similar and different – that their marriage was mixed in that regard throughout their own three phases of marriage. Four men and four women indicated that their marriages are not currently, nor have they ever been similar to that of their parents. Two males and one female noted a sense of continuity between their marriage and their parents’ marriage throughout its three phases. One male suggested a sense of continuity during the first and second phases of marriage, but a mixture of features during the empty-nest years. One female suggested continuity with her parents’ marriage during the first stage of marriage, and a mixture of features thereafter.

Frank: There are of course similarities. We are both the children of our parents. There are people who marry people who are either alike or opposite to whatever they grew up with for whatever reasons. I tend to be more like my father, but because as I was growing up I recognized things I didn’t like in my father, I tried to correct those things and I’m sure Beth did the same of those things with her mother who she identified with. In that same kind of vein, each of us probably saw things in our parents’ marriage that we became conscious of that we tried to avoid those pitfalls in our own marriage. It’s part of a natural process that people go through. Other than that almost subliminal awareness, there was no deliberate effort to avoid particular behavior.

Beth: I can see a constancy with my marriage, my parents’ marriage, and my grandparents’ marriage – just getting along. . . I suppose we’re better educated, let’s face
it. But that didn’t seem to matter much to my mother and father. They felt that they were educated enough for the times they lived in. The problems we have are different, but that’s true with anybody. We had different challenges to work with. One thing that I often think about is my maternal grandparents who, during their lifetime, took care of two mothers, some grandchildren, us when we moved there for a year, and then my mother’s youngest sister whose husband died when he was 40 and had a six month old baby and an eight year old. So when I think of hospitality, I think of my grandparents.

Dave: No. I guess I don’t remember all that much about my parents’ marriage. I remember being spanked by my father for wetting the bed, I remember being spanked by my father for taking the wire basket off my thumb and sucking my thumb, and then yelling and screaming at each other. But not that much about other interaction. Well, sitting at the table and eating my eggplant. For years. But I don’t see parallels with my marriage. . . And as I say, I think the one thing that probably in fact, and I think this in my first marriage was true, I had no model or skills at how you settle differences. So I see a vacuum in that aspect of it. Other than knowing that conflicts can be very dangerous, I didn’t have other skills or techniques to bring to bear in terms of when you have differences.

Gail: Well, the first thing that jumps to mind about what’s similar is that there’s one partner who’s very emotive and the other person who is very restrained. That’s very similar. The thing that would be different is how we manage that, and how we manage conflict. That’s very different. The other thing is that we are a much more economically stable couple. And I have a very strong support system and am very independent in many ways. My mother was quite independent in certain ways. This has allowed me to feel less angry. I’ve structured that over a long period of time. I’ve learned from women
of her generation how one can feel and be trapped. But I have many more choices and have created things so I have them.

John: In each case, her parents and my parents made a marriage and made a family. And whatever kind of pressure they were under, they stuck it out. There were no divorces. . . So we had an example of a family that stuck together — a husband and wife that stuck together through more difficulties that could have wrecked a marriage than we did. . . But the fact is that they stuck together and made their way through their lives. And they gave us meaning, and made sacrifices for us. So that left us a model to follow. So I think they’ve been very important to us. They’ve certainly been important to our children, and it’s a great loss when the grandparents die. But when they were living, they had a great influence on our children, and they have great memories of them.

Parental attitudes toward divorce

Eight of 12 female respondents and eight of 12 male respondents reported that their parents were disapproving of divorce. The remaining four males and four females indicated that their parents were accepting of divorce.

Arthur: Well, I think they were very much opposed to divorce. They didn’t really have any problem about it. One of my sisters had some problems with her marriage, and they didn’t know if they should advocate for divorce. They were very supportive of her, and eventually she decided not to. I think they strongly disapproved of divorce. I remember someone asked my mother one time if she ever thought of divorcing my father. And she said, “Well, I thought of murder once or twice, but never divorce.”
Irene: Well, there have been a few divorces in my family. And I never heard them say that the divorce was wrong, like morally wrong. I think their reaction was to be saddened by the divorce. I think both Ike and I have parents who stuck it out through hard times. I think especially Ike’s parents might have divorced had they lived in a different generation. My parents, no. They wouldn’t have considered divorce.

Kim: I don’t think that they had much experience with it. When I was growing up, we didn’t really know too many people who were divorced. But I don’t think they would have unilaterally thought it was wrong. I mentioned how my father talked about how unhappy his parents’ marriage was. So I don’t think he’d really judge someone for getting divorced if it just wasn’t working.

Money

Nine of 12 males and nine of 12 females reported that finances had either no influence, or a positive relationship on their marital relationships at any time during their marriage. While the amount of money couples had varied, most indicated that money was not a source of conflict.

Anne: We both come from families that . . . You know that famous remark about Quakers who came over to do good and did well. I mean, we’re very, very fortunate. We’re not like most Quakers who want to live simply and get paid as little as possible and all that. We do give an awful lot of money away, and maybe that eases our conscience, but we’ve always been very comfortable, and we’re very lucky that way.

Ben: We decided that money was not really that important to us. We wanted to have enough to get by, but the accumulation of wealth was not a priority. . . That’s a decision we made before we were Quakers. And I’m not sure that that’s necessarily a Quaker
value. Many of the early Pennsylvania Quakers were well-to-do bankers, farmers, landowners. The reason given for this is that they were so honest and upright in their business dealings that they did well financially. How much of that is bullshit, I don’t know.

One woman and one man indicated that money had either a negative or mixed influence on their marriages during all three phases. One woman reported a negative influence during the first two phases of her marriage, and a positive influence in the third phase. Another female indicated that money was a mixed influence during the first two phases of her marriage and became a positive influence in the third phase. The husbands of these two women assessed the impact of money on their marriages in the same manner.

Dave: In the past 15 years it’s gotten more complicated. When we didn’t have much money, it wasn’t a problem. It’s when we’ve gotten into estate planning that she will say that this money should go here, and that money should go there. In the past she used to say, “Well, that’s your department.”

Irene: I think worries over money were hard, really until his parents died and he inherited some money. He’s never earned very much money. I earn a lot more money, and I think that’s been really hard for him. There were times when that got very hard. I would feel that he would spend money on things that weren’t important.

Joyce: Probably the thing that’s been hardest for us has been money. Partly because John went back to graduate school so late. He was 35, which right now doesn’t seem so old, but then it did seem old when you’d finally get your degree. . . We had borrowed a lot of money to get him through school because I had the children, and it was hard for me
to work. So we were in terrific debt when he started teaching. We could never afford to buy a house because neither of us came from families who could afford to help us. So we always rented, and we lived many, many places. But it's been a struggle, and it's taken its toll because we never caught up. So then our kids got through college and we finally had some money for ourselves, which was nice. Because we've done some traveling. We went to France. We went to England. We went to Prince Edward Island, and have done other things like that.

Crises

Most respondents appeared to rely on their spouses to help them cope with crises. However, there were times when a husband or wife has felt unequal to the task, or times when one individual felt that the other was unavailable. Many participants mentioned their faith as a means of acquiring the strength necessary to deal with crises. Respondents varied in what they considered crises. For some, the death of a parent was a major crisis. Others experienced this as part of the natural course of life.

Anne: Well, I think we’ve pitched in. My mother was very ill right after my third child was born, and my father was just going crazy down in New Jersey. And I had to keep going up and down, up and down, up and down. And that was pretty tough. This went on from about maybe November until pretty soon after New Year’s when my mother died. That was a real tough time for me. I had a little baby and I finally took her down to show my mother just before Christmas. I think Art was very helpful during that time. That was a terrible time for me, but I think Art and I have been helpful to each other when our parents died and that sort of thing.
Drew: Well, I guess when our son Doug was killed, that was a crisis. .. We talked about that too. We didn’t close down. We went to meeting the Sunday after and we dealt with it slightly different because. . . well, I don’t know if it was different. We had a memorial service about a month afterwards, and I would just as soon, at that time, not have had that. Because it meant all these people. I don’t know. We just talked about it and got through it together. Some people wrote things, and Dave put that together. We got it typed out and sent it to people, all their recollections. I think that’s about the worst thing.

Eve: It just seems like our life has been a crisis followed by another one. Well, I think the fact that we were both experienced in Quaker worship permeated our being. The time that I became most conscious of this was when our son had his breakdown. And that was the only way to survive, was just to calm ourselves. And get in touch with whatever. Get grounded again so we could do what needed to be done. I think we’re relatively good at taking breaks which aren’t big things, but just getting away. I think we probably do a lot of things. I don’t know. I cry a lot. You just do what has to be done.

Linda: Well, one time one of our daughters fell off her bicycle in front of our house and was unconscious for a brief period and had a really bloody nose. That was the time before 911. So I ran to a neighbor’s house and got her to call the police while I was there trying to stop the nosebleed. The police called the ambulance and we went to the emergency room. From there, we had to take a taxi to the ear, nose, and throat doctor, and from there a taxi home. And I never once thought of calling Lou. That’s when I realized that things had to change, and that he had to be around more.
Changes over time

Each participant was asked how his or her marriage has changed and/or stayed the same over the years. Three of 12 males reported that things hadn’t changed very much and focused on continued similarity of interests and values. One of 12 females (not married to any of the aforementioned males) also reported that her marriage hasn’t changed that much over the years. The remaining 20 participants noted both areas of change and areas which have stayed the same.

Dave: It’s certainly changed focus in terms of child rearing to scattered relationships with the children, and a transformation of work focus to more flexible time, and has probably not changed in terms of each other’s having independent time and sometimes we do things together. So that’s always been the balance or mix.

Gail: It’s always been serious. Both of us are very serious people. We believe in Quaker hard work. Do good. Be good. Work good. As a couple I think we had a lot more fun when we were younger. We had more energy and weighed less too. The other thing that changed is that the kids were such a focal point for so long, although the committed relationship started a few years before that. The kids have determined what we can and can’t do. One thing we’re learning to do is be more playful.

Hope: I think realizing that it takes effort to make a marriage work has stayed the same. Compatibility and our Quaker interests have stayed the same. I think it changed when we added (our son) to our relationship, and that we’ve grown and been able to understand each other better and put aside the little things that drive us crazy. We try harder to really understand what the other person is saying while they’re saying it.

Three males discussed the impact of their aging on the responsibilities of their wives.
Cal: I'm not sure, but I would say as I get older, she is having more influence. She is more essential in a way and she assumes more responsibility for what has to be done. What clothes I wear, and such matters. And she is the one who gives me a haircut every once in a while and her share of responsibility in this marriage has increased in the last couple of years, and increases as I get still older. That's one of my advantages. Someone looks out for me, you see. It's a burden to her, but not impossible to carry. And that's how we have to work for the future to make the necessary decisions.

Ed: Well, one of the changes that has happened recently is that Eve is much more involved in her job while I'm at home, so that's a whole reversal.

Ike: Irene is burdened with a bit more responsibility than she really would want. I don't think she ever wanted to feel that she was forced to work. But she would always have found a job anyway, just because she can't keep still. Of course the early years were just years of having babies and bringing them up. That was wonderful. Now it's sort of a winding things up here perhaps. For me anyway. I've got another ten years or so. We'll see. I hope she doesn't spend the next ten years of her life taking care of me and driving me around.
This chapter presents salient trends emerging from identified themes, examines significant findings, and relates them to the current research, with particular emphasis upon the findings of Mackey and O'Brien (1995). The primary purpose of this study was to identify themes important in long term Quaker marriages. Ten themes emerged from the interview data gathered from 12 couples. This chapter begins with discussion and analysis of premarital issues of initial attraction and certainty about spouse prior to marriage. Relationship themes which emerged from the data follow. These themes are gender equity, communication, conflict, roles, relatedness, decision making, intimacy, and satisfaction with the relationship. The final theme involves the influence of external factors upon the marriage. Changes over time are also discussed. The theme of religion and culture was pervasive throughout the interviews, and in most cases could not be logically separated from the ten major themes. Chapter 5 concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study, an assessment of directions of future research, and implications for counseling.

Premarital Issues

Initial attraction

Six participants (three male and three female) mentioned looks as being important in initial attraction. This finding is contrary to that of Mackey and O'Brien (1995) who wrote, "Physical attraction was a central dimension of the beginnings of relationships for most individuals in our study, although not everyone talked about its importance in the same way" (p. 10). In his series of quantitative studies concerning choice of marital partner, Murstein (1976)
found that physical attractiveness was the first stage in mate selection. Walster (1966) found the same results and observed that physical attractiveness is the major determinant of initial attraction, especially for males. It seems logical that physical attractiveness is particularly operative during the initial phase of the relationship because humans tend to respond to the way people look before they get to know them. Thus the qualitative results of Mackey and O'Brien (1995) and the quantitative results of Murstein (1976) and Walster (1966) are inconsistent with the findings of the current study. It may be that this difference is secondary to current participants' being less likely to act upon impulse when approaching members of the opposite sex. Participants' behavior during interviews seems to support this speculation that they may be less spontaneous than other group of married couples. Two men had written notes to which they referred while being interviewed. It was this researcher's experience that in the majority of couples, at least one spouse mentioned discussing the interview ahead of time with his or her partner. The transcripts of interviews with Quaker couples were somewhat shorter than those of other groups of couples (Mengden, 1994; Kanter, 1993). As a whole, Quakers seemed perhaps less spontaneous and more reserved in their demeanor than other groups.

As in the research of Mackey and O'Brien (1995), couples in the current study were recruited because they had a similar religious background. Obviously, unlike other demographic variables such as race or ethnicity, religion can and did change for approximately half of participants in this study. However, respondents tended to come from similar social and socioeconomic backgrounds.

For those who were members or attenders of Quaker meeting at the time they met, all but two participants reported that this factor had a positive influence on their initial attraction. Having a Quaker background seemed to many to be a kind of shorthand suggesting that both partners would have similar backgrounds and share similar values. In this sense, initial attraction was similar for Quakers and the Mexican-Americans studied by Mackey and O'Brien (1995). As one birthright Quaker in the present study noted, there are certain "old Quaker names" familiar to
other Quakers. All but one birthright Quaker in the study had a family of origin from Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey, or Massachusetts. Many of these families were connected to one another via weekly, quarterly, or yearly meetings. In this manner, they shared a particular cultural milieu. Mackey and O'Brien (1995) observed that the concept of a marital relationship within a the context of a larger family was also important to Mexican-Americans – more so than to those in other ethnic groups. For Mexican-Americans, the emphasis upon family was probably in some part due to economic disadvantage and the dearth of opportunity to meet a potential partner outside of one’s immediate familial and social group. For the Quakers however, this economic disadvantage did not exist. Rather, it tended to be a point of pride for birthright Quakers to carry on the traditions of their forebears with regard to maintaining a particular family name, and educational legacy.

The concept of homogamy in the choice of a marriage partner has been studied by a variety of researchers (Hollinghead, 1950; Murstein, 1976; Moss, 1977; Nichols, 1978; Robertson, 1987). There is consensus among these researchers that there is a strong tendency for people to select mates from similar social classes, educational levels, occupations, religious and cultural backgrounds, and areas of residence. The results of the current study add further support to this theory. Mackey and O'Brien (1995) noted that symmetry of psychological characteristics was also important in choosing a spouse. This phenomenon was illustrated in the Quaker sample with participants mentioning simplicity, kindness, similarity of interests, enthusiasm, and intelligence as factors important in mate selection. Mackey and O'Brien (1995) link the concepts of homogamy and psychological intimacy, noting that the former appears to influence the latter.

Half of the couples in the study knew each other less than a year prior to getting married. This finding contradicts that of Lauer et al, (1990) who emphasized the importance of an extended dating process to successful, stable marriages. Presumably, the longer members of a couple know each other, the fewer the surprises that await them following the wedding. Another way of looking at this phenomenon was proposed by one Quaker woman who had known her
husband for approximately five years before marriage. She noted that no matter how long she and her husband dated prior to getting married, being married was a much different experience than dating.

**Certainty about spouse prior to marriage**

The couples in this study appeared more likely than those studied by Mackey and O'Brien to have approached courtship and marriage in a nontraditional manner. Half of the female participants in this study expressed some uncertainty about their prospective spouse or about marriage in general prior to getting married. In the Mackey and O'Brien (1995) research, only 22% of both male and female participants expressed ambivalence toward his or her prospective spouse (p. 7). The authors noted that for some people, ambivalence may be seen as part of a developmental transition from adolescence to adulthood, and this appears to be the case for most of the ambivalent Quaker women. Five reported not wanting to be in any intimate relationship at the time they met their future spouse, either because of difficulties in past relationships, or because marriage had not entered into their plans.

The demographics of Quaker males and females were different than those of the groups studied by Mackey and O'Brien (1995). Forty-two of the 120 individuals they studied were college graduates. Twelve percent had family incomes ranging from $75,000 to $99,000. In contrast, all but two of the Quaker participants were college graduates, and 15 had completed graduate school. Six couples had a family income of over $100,000. These differences in education and income may have had a significant influence upon courtship behavior, particularly for females. Five Quaker women reported that they had their own income from family inheritances. It may be that, since the majority of women interviewed were on a career path at the time of their marriage and/or came from relatively wealthy families, they felt less pressure to get married than those expecting to follow solely traditional role expectations. Perhaps they feared that getting married would interfere with their careers or education.
Men were half as likely as females to express doubts about their prospective spouse prior to marriage. The parents of most participants had assumed traditional roles. The males in the sample had many examples of how a married man can combine a career with the obligations of raising a family. This was not the case for most women, who tended to be more pensive about their decision to marry.

**Relationship Themes**

**Gender equity**

The importance of gender equity was evident in the attitudes of participants in the current study. Eleven of 12 females and 11 of 12 males reported that gender equality has been an important consideration in their marriages. The notion of equality between the sexes is a long-standing Quaker tradition. Lucretia Mott was an influential Quaker minister in the 19th century. Involved in the rights of women among many other social issues, Mott made a number of statements illustrating Quaker beliefs about women. Those quoted below are taken from a pamphlet compiled by Bacon (1980).

> Let Women then go on, not asking as a favor, but claiming as a right, the removal of all hindrances to her elevation in the scale of being. Then in the marriage union, the independence of husband and wife will be equal, their dependence mutual, and their obligations reciprocal (1849).

In contrast with a fairly strong sentiment of her time, however, Mott did not believe in the moral superiority of women over men:

> It has sometimes been said that if women were associated with men in their efforts, there would not be as much immorality as not exists, in Congress, for instance, and other places. But we ought, I think, to claim no more for woman than for man; we ought to put woman on a par with man, not invest her with power, or claim her superiority over her brother. If we do, she is just as likely to become a tyrant as man is (1853).

Bacon (1986) pointed out that, of the five organizers of the first women’s rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, four were members of the Religious Society of Friends. The tradition of equality between the sexes has its roots in a more general view of the essential
equality of all human beings. Quakers have a long history of persecution because of their refusal to treat others as superiors or inferiors. For example, even before pacifism became a value associated with Quakers, they were dismissed from the army of Oliver Cromwell because they refused to treat their officers as superiors. Friends refused to bow, use titles of honor, or remove their hats to anyone. For many years, they insisted on addressing people of all ranks using the informal “thou,” “thee,” and “thine” instead of the more formal “you,” and “yours.” This use of language persists in some Quaker circles today (Bacon, 1985).

Mackey and O’Brien (1995) found that African-Americans were much more likely than other groups to speak in nontraditional terms about their expectations for their relationship (25%, versus three percent of whites and eight percent of Mexican-Americans; p. 24). However, their reasons for doing so appear to be very different from those of Quakers. Quakers suffered from religious persecution during the 17th and 18th centuries. Their fortune as a group took a fairly rapid turn for the better during the mid- to late-18th century. The majority of the present sample enjoyed a recent family history of relative social and material privilege. Females and males thus had the education and financial wherewithal to at least discuss the possibility of taking on nontraditional roles. In contrast, Mackey and O’Brien (1995) hypothesized that the nontraditional expectations of African-American women were primarily a reaction to the hardships they had observed in other marital relationships.

Communication

Several variables were assessed with regard to the early, middle, and later years of marriage. Spanier (1976) elucidated the value of viewing marital adjustment as a process rather than as a “snapshot” (p. 16) taken of the continuum of adjustment at one point in time. Communication is a variable which changes over the course of a marriage. The “quality of communication” (Mackey & O’Brien, 1995; p. 142) has been identified as one of five significant factors contributing to marital satisfaction. A curvilinear pattern characterized communication in
the current study, with couples reporting better communication before and after the child rearing years. This pattern is consistent with the findings of researchers including Gurin, Veroff, and Feld (1960); Hicks and Platt (1970); Lewis and Spanier (1979); Spanier, Lewis and Cole (1975); and Mackey and O'Brien (1995).

Results also differed from those of Mackey and O’Brien (1995) who reported that, generally speaking, the longer couples were married the better communication became. By the third phase of marriage, 68% of individuals in the Mackey and O’Brien (1995) study reported communication to be positive. By contrast, less than half of the couples in the current study reported communication as positive in the third phase of marriage. One possible explanation for this finding noted by Mackey and O’Brien (1995) is that once children leave home, a lack of common interests and goals between partners may become more evident. Nadelson, et al (1984) opined that the transition to the post-child rearing years may be one of the most stressful periods of marriage. This assertion was echoed by two Quaker women who observed that the time when children leave home can be a pivotal point in a marriage during which many couples find themselves increasingly dissatisfied.

Among couples in the present study who reported having mixed or poor communication, deficits in communication skills were acknowledged by the participants, and four couples had attended Quaker-sponsored communication workshops, and/or had received couples counseling. Other participants described being raised in families in which self-control and emotional restraint were valued. Seven participants described being raised in homes in which there was considerable conflict between parents. This conflict was sometimes manifested in arguments, but more often emerged in a lack of verbal communication between participants’ parents. Participants in this group would note that they didn’t believe that their parents got along very well, but were sometimes at a loss as to how they knew. Unspoken and unresolved conflicts and differences were common, leaving participants without models of clear and open communication. For some couples, a pattern similar to that observed by Mackey and O’Brien (1995) occurred involving
spouses consciously working to improve upon the methods of communication they relied upon in their relationship with one another.

There may have been a geographical bias contributing to the seemingly reserved nature of many participants. One third of the Quakers interviewed were born and raised in New England. While one hesitates to make sweeping generalizations, it could be possible that people who grew up in New England may have been by socialization particularly prone to being reserved.

Among participants who were not birthright Quakers, all but three were raised in another Protestant denomination. This researcher’s reading and experience have revealed certain characteristics frequently associated with an upbringing in which the Protestant ethic (Weber, 1958) is emphasized. In the words of one study participant, one is raised to “do good” and “be good.” These directives can include such things as working hard, cultivating self-discipline, observing the “Golden Rule,” being frugal, avoiding alcohol and tobacco, seeking moderation in leisure pursuits, and avoiding excessive displays of emotion. The type of behavioral restraint advocated in such an approach to life may lead to the constriction of interpersonal communication described by Quaker participants.

Faith and Practice of the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends (1985) addresses some of these lifestyle issues. George Fox is quoted as follows:

Be still and cool in thy own mind and spirit from thy own thoughts, and then thou wilt feel the principle of God to turn they mind to the Lord God, whereby thou wilt receive his strength and power from whence life comes, to allay all tempests, against blustering and storms. That is it which moulds up into patience, into innocency, into soberness, into stillness, into stayedness, into quietness, up to God, with his power (p. 137).

The concept of silence has special meaning for Quakers. Smith (1992) suggested that Quakers “rediscovered a special kind of silence” (p. 34). In a Quaker meeting, there may be all sorts of sounds generated from traffic, nature, or any number of sources. However, the silence is that of alert individuals waiting on the light of God within. Some individuals use this silence as a time of meditation, but ideally, one strikes a balance between looking inward and consideration of
others. Otherwise, there would be no point in meeting as a corporate body. The value of silence often carried over into dealings with one’s family, as the present study suggested. This was seen in frequent acknowledgement of the importance of listening to one’s spouse and other family members with active concern. The amount of verbal communication obviously varied from couple to couple. Some were quite talkative and spoke of never running out of things to talk about. Others noted the comfort found in not having to keep up a constant stream of small talk. However, as indicated earlier, the majority of couples could not seem to arrive at a sense that their communication was satisfactory. The importance of active listening was a value often verbalized by participants. This quality appeared to be elusive nonetheless in many Quaker marriages.

Simplicity is another Quaker value which had a significant impact upon the lives and communication patterns of the couples in this study. Simplicity difficult to define because of its relativity. In the past, Quakers wore plain dark colors and for a time, eschewed art, drama, literature, and music (Bacon, 1985). All of these prohibitions have been eliminated, and there is both an artist and a musician in the present sample. However, Quakers still struggle with the concept of simplicity, and each must come to his or her own definition. This seems like a potential area of conflict for couples, but no one in the current study mentioned living a simple life as an area of conflict. Two couples lived in large, antiques homes furnished with antiques – most of which seemed to be family heirlooms. The remaining couples lived in smaller homes with modest furnishings. The following explanation of simplicity written by Smith (1992) is consistent with the observations of this researcher:

Whatever standards of simplicity we adopt, we shall probably find ourselves at odds with a society devoted to materialism and the desire of luxurious living. Both capitalism and communism rest on materialistic – not spiritual – premises. Still Friends, in listening to the Inner Voice know that moderation is better than excess, that our lives should be centered, not dissipated, and that if we cannot live in voluntary poverty, we should not live in voluntary prodigality. As the old Shaker hymn has it, “’Tis a gift to be simple...” (p. 34, italics original).
The concept of simplicity can also refer to communication. The term “plain speech” is generally associated with use of the terms “thee,” “thou,” and “thine.” However, it can also be used to refer to speech which is simple and direct with little in the way of superfluous modifiers (Smith, 1992). The tendency to speak in this manner probably contributed to the aforementioned relative brevity of the interviews.

Conflict

The above discussion elucidates ways in which Quakers think about their lives and communication with others. Difficulties with communication appeared to be related to conflict management in the present study. Eight of 12 men and three of 12 women reported that they avoided conflict throughout their marriage. Much of the literature supports the above findings that women are more likely than men to communicate and confront relationship problems (Mackey & O’Brien, 1995; Gottman, 1994; Wamboldt & Reiss, 1989; Lewis, 1988a; Huston & Ashmore, 1986).

It may be that those who tended to avoid conflict had backgrounds in which the expression of anger or dissent was discouraged. In their study of conflict resolution in Quaker families, Brutz and Ingoldsby (1984) compared a Quaker sample of 291 couples (130 males and 158 female respondents remained) with the results of a national study of family violence. Demographically, the sample contacted by Brutz and Ingoldsby (1984) was similar to the current sample. Overall violence was defined as at least one violent act toward one’s spouse during the survey year. The percentage of husband-to-wife overall violence was 14.6 versus the national average of 12.8. Wife-to-husband violence was 15.2% compared with a 11.7% as the national average. Quakers were much more likely to engage in pushing, grabbing, shoving, kicking, biting, or punching than they were to engage in beating each other up, or threatening or using knives or guns.
In the current study, no participant reported being either the victim or the perpetrator of spousal violence. They were not directly asked about this topic, so the existence of such violence in this sample is unknown. However, the conclusions drawn by Brutz and Ingoldsby (1984) may have implications for the difficulty with conflict resolution of participants in the current study. For example, Quakers have a high regard for being truthful. It may be that among these 12 couples, there was a greater willingness to admit difficulties with communication and conflict resolution than there is among the general population of married couples. There were eight convinced male friends in this sample. These eight males had not grown up within a Quaker tradition of peaceful conflict resolution. It may be that they were drawn to Quakerism in part because of personal difficulties in dealing with conflict. The association of Quakerism with pacifism suggests that, through this religion, one may learn peaceful ways of communication and conflict resolution. However, these techniques require considerable interpersonal and communication skills. As noted earlier, some participants made mention of deficits in these areas. One man reported on several occasions that he is not expressive, and that this tendency is a source of conflict between his wife and himself. His wife described her frustration at trying to communicate with him, and it appeared that this was a significant and ongoing difficulty in their marriage. Another female participant recalled in incident in which her husband was going to discipline their children but “couldn’t get angry.” This was cause for amusement among family members, but one wonders how individuals in this family did deal with conflict.

Mackey and O’Brien (1995) noted that several women in their study were particularly conflicted regarding their husbands’ lack of availability and unwillingness to talk with them about differences. For these women, this pattern began in the first stage of marriage and extended into the parenting years. In the Quaker sample, women who noted a similar conflict tended to report that it had extended throughout all three phases of the marriage. However, like the Mackey and O’Brien (1995) respondents, Quaker males and females were very similar in their observations of how they and their spouses handled differences and interpersonal conflicts. Also, like the males
in the Mackey and O'Brien (1995) study, Quaker males were very willing to point out areas in which they had changed, as well as areas in which they were still struggling. The agreement between spouses regarding the ways in which conflicts were handled was thought by Mackey and O'Brien (1995) to be indicative of both the validity of their data, and one of the reasons why the marriages studied had remained stable. The same may be said of the data from the Quaker sample.

Gottman (1994) studied the relationship between marital interaction and marital satisfaction and found that some interaction patterns such as disagreement and anger exchange may not be harmful to a marriage in the long run. It appears that it is necessary for disagreements to be aired in a marriage. Gottman (1994) suggested that “an agreeable and compliant wife was dangerous for improvement in marital happiness” (p. 131). This is because it is generally the role of the wife to bring up areas of conflict in this society. Gottman’s (1994) findings are consistent with those of the current study. The high rate of marital satisfaction among Quaker couples may be due in large part to the wife’s tendency to bring up areas of conflict despite the husband’s desire to avoid conflict. Through quantitative observational methods, Gottman (1994) supported the notion that within marriage, there are conflict engagers and conflict avoiders. There are rewards and costs of both behavioral styles. Gottman (1994) observed that a conflict-engaging style makes both problem solving and negative behaviors (such as complaining and criticizing) more likely than a conflict-avoiding style.

As with the ethnic minorities studied by Mackey and O’Brien (1995), religion seems to have mediated conflicts for several Quaker couples. The manner in which this occurred appeared different for ethnic minorities and Quakers. For example, Mackey and O’Brien (1995) quoted a Mexican-American woman as follows:

It was hard for me to be on a strict budget. But I never told him that I wished I wouldn’t have married, like a lot of people do. I never said anything like that at all. I knew God would help out. I knew that the Holy Spirit gave men strength and I was the churchgoer while my husband was not. He never would go to church... after we married, he would go, but at first he wouldn’t go. I think that really helped me to have my Lord on my side
and the Holy Spirit. I knew he would give me strength... I’ve always had religion in my life, and I think that helped me a lot (pp. 54-55).

Instead of having faith in a God who would somehow make things work out, Quakers tended to view religion as promoting a sense of personal agency in dealing with other people. A Quaker male is quoted below:

I don’t like to have deep theological discussions, and one of the reasons I like Quakerism is that it’s very individual. I don’t believe in a god that’s sort of like me, but is up there in the heavens somehow pulling strings... In my opinion, the more important issue is how we treat each other on earth.

Roles

Results of the current study suggested that philosophical belief in gender equality does not obviate the assumption that marital responsibilities will be divided along traditional lines. Altrocchi and Crosby (1989) devised a scale assessing traditional versus egalitarian roles in marriage making the point that perceptions of egalitarianism and traditionalism can differ significantly from actual behavior. A tradition of equality notwithstanding, in the present study, seven of 12 males and eight of 12 females expected to adopt traditional roles of either breadwinner or homemaker respectively. This finding is consistent with those of Mackey and O’Brien (1995) who noted that the majority of participants in all ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic groups expected to adopt traditional roles. The researchers observed that traditional expectations were most likely a function of the values of the times at which the marriages took place. This assertion was supported in the Quaker sample, with males expecting to assume a non-traditional role tending to be younger than their more traditional counterparts. The men who spoke about wanting to divide household responsibilities equally generally mentioned the influence of the women’s movement in the formation of these attitudes.

Women participating in the current study had educational and vocational opportunities not widely available to females until years later. Consequently, they encountered many of the
same challenges facing females currently attempting to simultaneously nurture a career and a family. Child care in infancy was almost exclusively the province of mothers. One woman recalled that, prior to having children, she and her husband tried to make a decision about who would be the primary child caregiver based upon who had the least to lose by giving up full-time employment with regard to salary and benefits. In this situation, the wife had the more lucrative position. The husband was employed by Quakers at the time, and, while he found the work very rewarding, he did not enjoy a salary and benefits comparable to those of his wife. According to their early discussions, it would have therefore made more economic sense for the husband to assume primary responsibility for child care. This did not occur. Instead, the husband found a higher-paying job in a technical field, and the wife initially left her job altogether to care for their children. She returned to work on a part-time basis when her children entered school. There may have been at least two strong societal pressures operating on both spouses to cause them to change their initial plans. There was, and still is, a pervasive sense that the male should assume major responsibility for earning the family’s income. Conversely, there is the strong sentiment that the female should assume primary responsibility for child care and homemaking. Had this couple chosen iconoclastic roles, it probably would have been very difficult for them to maintain these choices given societal bias.

Men’s involvement in the lives of their children tended to increase as the children got older. Three men and one woman reported that they didn’t relate that well to babies because they’re not as interesting as older children who have developed language skills and more defined personalities. As children grew, there was a strong tendency for fathers to take a more active role in their care. Fathers involved their children in household chores and sometimes exposed them to their occupational environments.

Both parents were generally involved in their children’s education, and education of their children was a high priority throughout the sample. A Quaker education was deemed particularly important, especially at the pre-college level. Five couples spoke of the financial hardship they
endured in order to send their children to a Friends school. These schools were perceived as having high academic standards, but also helped to inculcate children with Quaker values of hard work, fairness, honesty, and service to others. Faith and Practice (1985) states the following with regard to Quaker education:

A Quaker school emphasizes the testimonies or values important to Friends, such as the value of consensus, the Meeting for Worship, the principles and practice of non-violence, the dignity of physical work, the liberty of an unencumbered life-style and the value of an atmosphere of trust.

In a Friends school, human development and human excellence take precedence over academic excellence.

A Quaker school strives to demonstrate that love is possible in a group significantly larger than the family.

A relevant Friends school today must strive to foster and restore authentic speech... “Yes” must mean yes in a Friends school, and “No” must mean no (p. 132).

A critical tenet of Quaker education, and Quakerism in general, is that direct experience takes precedence over learning from a secondary source whenever possible. For example, it is preferable to learn about pond life from an actual pond instead of reading about a pond. Loukes (1967) states that science and religion are intertwined. This is an important point in considering the vocational choices of study participants as well as their choices regarding education. According to Loukes (1967), the “offence” of many religions is to “introduce first causes in the place of immediate causes” (p. 60). If a child asks, for example, why the grass is green, the response, “God made it that way” cuts off any further mystery or discussion of what is known about why the grass is green. If the child persists and asks who made the first blade of grass green, a response should acknowledge that there are events in nature that still aren’t understood—that we can see evidence of God at work, but we’re far from knowing how everything works. Such a response can pique a child’s interest in exploring a phenomenon further rather than stifling curiosity. Thus, in Quakerism, there is no contradiction in believing in both God and the scientific method. Five participants in the current study were employed as scientists or in another
technical field. One scientist who had converted to Quakerism said that a large part of the religion's appeal is that it doesn't conflict with his science.

Compatibility

All 24 participants indicated they had a complementary style of relating to their spouses during the beginning, child rearing, and post-child rearing years. This total exceeds the rate of complementary relationships found by Mackey and O'Brien (1995) which was approximately 78%, with a trend toward symmetry in the later years of marriage. This style was primarily reflected in perceived personal traits. For example, some participants described their partners as outgoing, versus the participants' more reserved social behavior. Others characterized their approach to problem solving as structured and orderly while reporting that their spouse had more of a tendency to view the gestalt of a problem first, then work on details. It may be that couples in the present sample became accustomed to a particular way of relating early on in the relationship, and retained this pattern despite psychological changes and growth on the part of one or both spouses.

Marital Behavior

Despite complementary styles of relating, which could suggest differences in styles of communicating, eleven of 12 men, and seven of 12 females described themselves as instrumental versus expressive over the three phases of their marriage. An instrumental orientation implies that a person is more likely to engage in task-oriented behaviors versus relationship behaviors (Mackey and O'Brien, 1995). Mackey and O'Brien (1995) found a somewhat different pattern of results: During the initial phase of marriage, 70% of men described their behavior in instrumental terms, while two-thirds of women used a mixture of expressive and instrumental terms to describe their behavior (p. 27). A large change from the early years of marriage to the post-child
rearing years occurred in the men in the Mackey and O'Brien (1995) research, with these males becoming much more likely to use expressive terms in defining themselves and their behavior. By contrast, in the Quaker sample, individuals who described their behavior as instrumental in the early phase of marriage tended to describe their behavior in the same manner during child rearing and post-child rearing. Similarly, those considering themselves primarily expressive initially retained this description of their behavior throughout their marriage. Despite a considerable degree of traditional role differentiation, it appears that both women and men viewed their situations largely as a series of tasks to be accomplished in an orderly fashion. This finding appears somewhat contradictory, given the way in which all individuals described their interpersonal fit as complementary rather than symmetrical. One possible reason for this paradox is that both males and females in the sample generally took considerable pride in their intellects and in their academic and professional achievements. It may be that participants viewed an expressive or intuitive approach to communicating about themselves and their behavior as being inconsistent with their view of themselves and their intellectual capabilities.

Relatedness

This study considered a group of variables known as “relational values” (Mackey & O'Brien, 1995, p. 33). These variables arose from researchers who provided theoretical support for the notion that psychological differences between men and women arise from the different biological and environmental experiences of males and females (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Surrey, 1984). These researchers observed that males and females begin with distinct biological points of origin and follow different socialization paths through childhood. They reach adulthood with different gender identities, role behaviors, and personality traits. Through this socialization process, boys are pushed toward differentiation from the mother and toward adopting a male role based on identification with the father. The boy’s relational ego is
repressed, and an autonomous ego develops. Girls, on the other hand, develop a relational ego through identification with the mother. Thereby girls presumably become adults with a capacity for empathy and relationships which males do not have (Kanter, 1993).

The relational variables considered in both the current study and in the research of Mackey and O’Brien (1995) are respect, understanding, sensitivity, and trust. With regard to respect and trust, all Quaker participants valued these qualities highly throughout all three stages of marriage, and there were no significant gender differences. These results are similar to those obtained by Mackey and O’Brien (1995). In considering understanding, almost half of both Quaker male and female participants reported some difficulty with his or her spouse’s ability to understand him or her during at least one phase of the marriage. By contrast, Mackey and O’Brien (1995) found that both husbands and wives viewed wives as more understanding. This difference may be due to the communication difficulties which were more prevalent for Quakers than for those studied by Mackey and O’Brien (1995). It appears unlikely that Quaker women and men were socialized so differently from those in the Mackey and O’Brien (1995) sample to cause Quaker women not to develop a relational ego, or for Quaker men not to develop an autonomous ego. The majority of both Quaker men and women perceived their spouses as sensitive to their needs, and there was little change in this feeling over the three stages of marriage. This finding conflicts with that of Mackey and O’Brien (1995) who observed a similar pattern with sensitivity as they did with understanding – women were regarded by both themselves and their husbands as more sensitive than men. In the opinion of this researcher, this finding may be an artifact of the order in which questions were asked. Quaker participants were first asked about understanding, then about sensitivity. It may be that “understanding” and “sensitivity” were perceived as very similar concepts and were therefore rated accordingly.
Decision making

Twenty of 24 respondents described their decision making style as logical during the second two phases of marriage. This finding is consistent with participants’ view of themselves as primarily instrumental in their communication style. Mackey and O’Brien (1995) also observed that most participants in their study regarded themselves as logical decision makers regardless of gender. However, Mackey and O’Brien (1995) and Quaker participants differed with regard to mutuality in couples’ decision making. Mackey and O’Brien (1995) found that mutuality in decision making increased from 34% to 48% from the first phase of marriage to the third phase. Thirty-eight percent of participants recalled decision making as primarily separate in phase one which declined to 18% in phase three (p. 105). In conflict with these findings, all Quaker respondents said that they were likely to make decisions in a variable or mutual manner rather than individually throughout the three phases of marriage. Given the mutual nature of the Quaker decision making process as it occurs during Quaker meeting, it would be contrary to expectations to find unilateral decision making of participants without the input of their spouses. The fact that both females and males described their decision making styles as instrumental may reflect the parity in educational background of both spouses in the majority of couples interviewed.

The issue of power in relationships comes into play particularly as one considers how married people make decisions. Kelley (1979) observed that continual movement toward a balance of power is a hallmark of stable marriages. Similarly, in Blood’s (1969) typology of marriages, egalitarian couples reported the highest levels of marital satisfaction. The results of the current study lend support to these theories.

Intimacy

Four of 12 women and seven of 12 men reported having a positive sexual relationship throughout the course of their marriage. This finding is in contrast to that of Mackey and O’Brien.
In their research, they found that the majority of respondents reported having a satisfying sexual relationship throughout their marriage. In the present sample, it appears that a combination of factors may have conspired to produce such a contrary finding. One factor may be the high premium Quakers place on honesty. It can be very difficult to discuss sexual difficulties, and it may be that Quakers are less likely than other people to gloss over problems when directly asked about their sex lives. A second factor may be overall sexual conservatism and a relative lack of spontaneity within the sample studied. A geographical bias was suggested earlier as contributing to participants' being reserved. Limited support for this theory may be found in the striking differences in the character of discussion about sex between most of the sample and a couple with different geographic origins. Most study participants were born and raised in the northeastern United States. Both members of one couple, however, were born and raised in Germany and England respectively, and came to the United States as young adults. This couple described a very active and satisfying sex life during the early and middle years of their marriage. In the later years, they described a dramatic decline in sexual intercourse, but noted that physical and emotional intimacy was still of paramount importance in their lives together.

A third factor which may have hampered a satisfactory sexual relationships in the majority of couples interviewed, is difficulties with communication and conflict resolution. Couples describing sexual problems through all three phases of their marriage tended to have difficulty talking with each other about their needs. For example, the wife in a couple married 53 years described her feeling that if she were more physically affectionate with her husband, which she would enjoy, he would misconstrue her behavior as an invitation to sexual intercourse.

Ade-Ridder (1990) discussed the results of longitudinal studies on aging and sexuality conducted at Duke University. She noted that there is some evidence, albeit inconclusive, that sexual activity is inversely related to socioeconomic status for women, but not for men. In fact, socioeconomic status was found to be one of the most important positive correlates of sexual behavior and interest for men. Male sexual ability and interest appeared to be related to health.
capacity, and both men and women attributed the cessation of sexual intercourse to the male. Knowledge of sexuality was also positively related to sexual activity. In the present study, health difficulties were specifically identified as a deterrent to sexual activity by only one couple. It is unknown if health considerations were extant for other couples as well. Since sexual difficulties appeared throughout the marriages of most participants, it appears unlikely that health problems were a significant contributor. In opinion of this researcher, problems with communication and conflict resolution were a far more important factor overall.

Faith and Practice of the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends (1985) quotes a 1962 writing of Robert O. Blood, Jr. in its discussion of love and sexual relationships:

Love is a blend of several elements – sexual attraction, companionship and care.

SEXUAL ATTRACTION. Love is not merely platonic, not viewing from afar, but a desire for physical proximity. This doesn’t mean that the proof of love is willingness to have premarital intercourse. Rather, it means enjoying each other’s presence, being quickened by the sight and especially by the touch of the other, being physically impelled toward each other.

COMPANIONSHIP. This is the social element in love: the enjoyment of doing things together, of togetherness quite apart from sexuality. It is the basic element in friendship and is simply intensified in love. It is one of the redeeming elements that make married love more than mere sexual desire.

CARE. Both sex and companionship can be exploited selfishly. But care is by definition altruistic. It involves concern for the partner, interest in his welfare, and effort to meet his needs. One of the rewarding aspects of being in love is knowing that somebody cares. Being in love is rewarding, not only in receiving care but also in giving it. To meet the partner’s need is to be needed oneself. (pp. 160-161).

Data from the current study suggest that participants tended to emphasize companionship and care aspects of love over and above sexual attraction. Virtually all participants spoke of their continued enjoyment in spending time with their spouse, and of the depth of their caring for one another.

Satisfaction with the relationship

Eight of 12 women and ten of twelve men reported that, overall, they were satisfied with their marriages throughout the course of the relationship. A review of the findings of Mackey and O’Brien (1995) revealed both similarities to, and differences from, the factors associated with
the marital satisfaction of Quakers. Mackey and O'Brien (1995) identified level of interpersonal conflict, mutuality of decision making, quality of communication, relational values, and intimacy as being most important in marital satisfaction. The researchers associated high levels of conflict with greater dissatisfaction with the marriage. This finding is consistent with those of the present study. While Quakers reported some difficulty with conflict resolution, these conflicts were generally not of a magnitude to seriously disrupt the relationship. Couples for whom conflict was serious were less likely to report satisfaction with the relationship. Mutuality of decision making was associated with greater marital satisfaction for both Quakers and the Mackey and O'Brien sample. The relational values of trust, respect, and understanding were found by Mackey and O'Brien (1995) to be significantly correlated with marital satisfaction. The same was the case for the Quaker sample.

Comparison of the two samples with regard to communication and intimacy was less straightforward. As noted earlier, there was a pattern within the Mackey and O'Brien (1995) sample of improved communication over time. This was associated with a general trend toward greater expressiveness, particularly on the part of males, and with increased marital satisfaction. Neither the trend toward improved communication nor greater expressiveness in males was noted in the Quaker sample. With regard to intimacy, the majority of those studied by Mackey and O'Brien (1995) who were satisfied with their marriages described sexual relations in positive terms. In the Quaker sample, sexual relations did not appear to be significantly related to reports of marital satisfaction.

Closer examination of critical themes among Quakers reveals some likely reasons for such a high rate of satisfaction despite difficulties with communication, and a general lack of sexual intimacy. A high degree of commitment to one's spouse and the marriage is one such reason. Commitment was a critical value espoused by almost all participants. Many noted that commitment plays and has played a major role in keeping their marriages together, especially during difficult periods. It may be that weathering these difficult periods served to foster a
particular sense of appreciation of one’s spouse and one’s marriage in the majority of
participants. It may also be the case that the sense of enjoyment most participants felt in the
company of his or her spouse contributed significantly to a sense of satisfaction. In addition, a
shared history, common values, and a desire to work through problems were all mentioned as
factors helping to keep marriages together. It appeared that these factors may have overshadowed
the impact of mixed or even poor communication at times, as well as the relative lack of sexual
intimacy.

External factors

Extended family

Slightly less than half of the participants in this study reported that their extended
families had a positive influence on their marriage. This figure is consistent with the results of
the Caucasian portion of the sample of Mackey and O’Brien (1995) who found the strongest
bonds with extended families among Mexican-American couples. Women in the current study
were more than three times more likely than men to indicate that their extended family had a
positive influence throughout their marriage. Men and women were almost equally likely to have
extended family members in the same geographic region in which they resided. However,
women reported more total interaction, and more positive interaction with their families of origin
than did men.

Wambolt and Reiss (1989) indicated that women are “relationship specialists.” They
suggested that women, by being involved in a more complex network of relationships, may
develop stronger interpersonal skills needed for successful relationships. The researchers were
careful to offer the caveat that their findings should not be interpreted as a means to place an
unfair responsibility upon women for relationship success. Wambolt and Reiss (1989) found that
greater expressiveness on the part of the female’s family of origin led to greater relationship
satisfaction because greater agreement concerning relationship ground rules had been achieved.
These results are consistent with those of the present study. Since many Quaker females reported their contact with their families of origin as positive rather than negative or non-existent, it may be that these relationships were more expressive.

Parental attitudes toward divorce

Two-thirds of participants' parents indicated their opposition to divorce. Most participants described their parents as committed to one another, even though their may have been difficult times. The opposition to divorce may be significantly related to the social stigma attached to this phenomenon at the time during which participants' parents were married. Of the two participants who had been divorced themselves, one was a Quaker at the time of his first marriage, and his divorce. Quakerism does not prohibit divorce. The meeting is encouraged to take on responsibility for the well-being of both couples and individuals:

The meeting has a special opportunity to help early in a troubled marriage, to support impulses toward reconciliation, to help the couple considering separation and/or divorce to be more objective about the issues involved, about the impact on children and on wider relationships. The meeting should uphold the value and integrity of each individual, helping each to affirm self-esteem and purpose.


All participants reported that Quakerism had a positive influence on their marriage. The meeting itself was a major influence for most couples. As noted earlier, being a member or consistent attender of Quaker meeting cannot be an experience of passivity. Given the fact that members are expected to minister to themselves and each other, there may be social pressure upon active participants to serve as role models for younger or single members. A feeling of responsibility to the larger community could enhance the likelihood that spouses will remain committed to each other. Quakers who were married under the care of a meeting could feel a particular obligation to keep their marriages together, since they are responsible to the meeting as well as to each other.
Money

Nine of 12 males and nine of 12 females reported that money had either no influence, or a positive influence upon their marriages throughout. These 18 individuals were not necessarily the wealthiest of the sample. Rather, it seemed that these individuals were better able than the others to come to a consensus about how money should be allocated. By contrast, Mackey and O’Brien (1995) found that the lack of money was a significant stressor for approximately half of all participants during the first phase of marriage. The effects of family incomes became less stressful during the post-child rearing phase for whites and African-Americans, but continued to be a source of stress for most of the Mexican-Americans in the sample. Among the Quaker sample, most participants reported having more money in the post-child rearing phase of marriage. This was due in part to children becoming financially independent, and in part to parents and other relatives having left money to participants. However, money was not a significant source of stress regardless of the income level and expenses of participants. The issue of money appeared to be intricately connected to the Quaker value of simplicity discussed earlier. Most couples reported that the decision to live simply was a conscious one, regardless of their income.

Historically, Quakers have been quite successful in business. In his 1998 book concerning the history of Quaker-run businesses in England, Walvin noted that Quakers, as a rule, brought the values of honesty and integrity into their business lives. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Quaker business people monitored each other both to offer assistance if needed, and to negatively sanction un-Quakerly behavior such as dishonest business practices. In large part because of their reputation for honesty, many Quaker businesses began to thrive. An analogous phenomenon began in America just prior to the Industrial Revolution (Bacon, 1985). Quakers became increasingly successful in business. Again, this is attributed largely to their honest business practices. Bacon (1985) reported that Quakers were responsible for setting fixed prices
for their merchandise or services so that all would receive the same treatment, regardless of the ability to bargain.

Many of the birthright Quakers in the present study were beneficiaries of their ancestors’ business success. Eight of the ten birthright Quakers interviewed mentioned having some sort of inheritance. Such financial success could foster conflict in those attempting to lead simple lives. Most participants with high incomes and/or inherited money reported avoiding this potential conflict in several ways including giving money away, spending it on educating their children, or using it to buy experiences such as travel instead of material goods.

Changes over time

Participants described both changes in external factors and within their relationships as time progressed. When asked about change, almost all participants reported that the most major external change involved their children's growing up and leaving home. The relationships of participants with their spouses, children, and parents were heterogeneous. Brubaker (1990) reported that in general, family ties are very important to those in later life, and results of the current study support this assertion. Those participants whose parents were still living expressed concern about their care. Children were perceived as a major source of comfort and support for many participants, even though they still may have required guidance and assistance.

Retirement was a major event for few participants because only three were completely retired. One woman found the retirement of her husband to be a stressful event to which she was still adjusting. Another woman reported enjoying her husband's semi-retirement a great deal because they were able to spend more time together.

Relationship factors tended to remain constant. A few participants reported better communication over the course of time, particularly from the child rearing years to the empty nest years. However, participants tended to emphasize constants in their marital relationships such as commitment and love.
Limitations of the study

A qualitative research method allows the researcher the flexibility to make a preliminary foray into heretofore unexplored questions and problems. (The reader is referred to Chapter 3 for a discussion of the merits of the qualitative research method employed in this study.) With its flexibility, however, come a variety of limitations.

The current study was conducted using a sample of convenience. Quakers were recruited on a volunteer basis from Friends meetings in the Greater Boston area. Because random sampling techniques were not used, the extent to which one may safely generalize from these findings to Quakers in general and/or to other couples married for over 20 years is limited. The participants who volunteered for this study may have had characteristics differing from those who met the study criteria, but didn’t volunteer. Those who participated may have had a particular interest in discussing their marriage which could indicate that these marriages were somehow different from those of non-volunteers.

The notion of geographical influences upon socialization was addressed in this study. Herein lies another possible source of bias. The experiences of Caucasian, mostly wealthy Quakers from the Northeastern United States may be very different from those of married couples who are not wealthy, or Quakers, or from the Northeastern United States. As Mackey and O’Brien (1995) pointed out, socioeconomic and cultural factors can have a significant impact upon the lives of married couples. For instance, it may be that less wealthy Quakers have marital experiences more similar to those of the blue collar participants studied by Mackey and O’Brien (1995). In short, the characteristics of current study participants are inextricably tied to the results. Different characteristics may have elicited different results.

The use of a retrospective interview created another source of potential bias. Participants were asked to recall events, behaviors, and emotions prior to their marriage as well as during early and mid-marriage. The passage of time may have altered the extent to which participants
accurately recalled these events, behaviors, and emotions. Or, participants may have distorted these phenomena to fit into a particular way of understanding their marriage at the current time. Participants were interviewed on one day only (with one exception). A host of life’s vagaries may have influenced responses on that particular day. Also, the extent to which couples discussed the interviews beforehand may have had an impact upon events recalled or interpretations of these events.

The researcher introduced more sources of bias. My feelings and attitudes about the person I was interviewing, Quakerism, marriage, knowledge of the Mackey and O’Brien (1995) findings, or a range of other factors may have influenced my line of questioning. While a standard interview format was used, follow-up questions were critical in achieving the richness of data required in this study. It was important to elicit a full response, and for this reason, follow-up questioning could not be rigidly controlled.

Directions for future research

This research builds upon the work of Mackey and O’Brien (1995) who studied the long term marriages of sixty couples with racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and religious differences. The current study focuses on the Religious Society of Friends – a small Protestant group. All participants lived in Massachusetts. As noted above, some findings may be heavily influenced by geography. For a more thorough discussion of the long term marriages of Quakers in the United States, it would be necessary to study a more geographically representative sample of Quakers.

All the Quakers interviewed were members or attenders of unprogrammed meetings. Elsewhere in the United States are more programmed meetings. In addition, there is a considerable number of Evangelical Friends (Bacon, 1985). Proselytizing is something generally eschewed by Friends in more liberal meetings such as those to which participants of the current study belonged. It may be that marital roles are more traditional for Friends involved in meetings
which in some respects appear more similar to mainline Protestantism than the liberal Quakerism studied.

Among the participants studied, it appeared that philosophical belief in gender equality was prevalent. However, there tended to be a sharp, traditional division of labor along gender lines. This phenomenon gives one pause to wonder if there was greater dissatisfaction with roles among the participants than was indicated in this study. The women in particular would seem likely to have felt dissatisfied with the role of homemaker, given their level of education and vocational training, coupled with a belief in equality of the sexes. Future researchers may further refine questioning about role differentiation and any cognitive dissonance experienced by members of Quaker couples.

An interesting topic studied by Brutz and Ingoldsby (1984) concerned conflict resolution and family violence among Quakers. Conflict resolution appeared to present difficulty for many of the couples interviewed in the current study. Quantitative analysis may be brought to bear on this issue and could concern such problems as the extent to which conflict avoidance and difficulty resolving conflict are characteristics of the larger Quaker population. This type of study could lead to the development of conflict resolution training designed for couples and families. The issue of family violence was not addressed in the current study. However, Brutz and Ingoldsby (1984) found that such violence does exist within some Quaker families. The extent to which this is the case should be investigated further, also with an eye toward developing appropriate intervention programs. It would appear that problems with conflict resolution and with family violence would be particularly difficult to discuss in a religious society whose most well-known value is non-violence. However, as Brutz and Ingoldsby (1984) found, Quakers acknowledged these difficulties when asked about them directly.

Another interesting question is the extent to which the interviews themselves influenced marital behavior. This researcher received immediate feedback from participants, the vast majority of which emphasized the fact that participants were asked to recall events they may not
have thought about in years. One couple asked for copies of transcripts of their interviews to use as tools for enhancing communication. In this sample, for instance, it would be informative to find out if the interviews had any impact upon communication between spouses, since this was an area of concern to so many participants.

**Implications for counseling**

A few participants in this study discussed misconceptions others tend to have about Quakerism, at least in the northeastern United States. Among these misconceptions are the idea that Quaker beliefs are the same as those of the Amish or Mennonites. Two participants mentioned that because they were Quakers, they found themselves in situations where they were called upon to mediate a conflict at work, or even oversee a memorial service for a deceased co-worker. Thus, in counseling Quakers, a psychotherapist must take care to find out what is and what is not significant in their belief systems. Some generalizations about Quakers may be useful. For example, it appears to be the case that Quakers have a fundamental belief that God, or "the spirit" is present in all humans. The manner in which this belief may manifest itself is via care and attention as to how they treat others. It has been noted that many of the Quakers in the current sample appeared reserved. This may be because Quakers are thoughtful and careful in their speech, and should not be misinterpreted as coldness or as indicative of a lack of insight.

This propensity toward reticence may have fostered some of the communication difficulties reported by the current sample. It has also been noted that active listening is an important Quaker value. If Quaker individuals or couples present communication as an area of concern, it may be useful to assess the capacity for active listening, and do direct teaching of this skill if indicated (Wells, Figurel & McNamee, 1975). Husbands' lack of expressiveness was a concern for several of the wives in the current study. In couples' therapy, it would be critical for the therapist to understand whence this lack of expressiveness arises. It may be perceived as withholding or passive-aggressive, when in fact, socialization has not given the male the tools
with which to be expressive. Indeed, this appeared to be the case with all males studied by Mackey and O'Brien (1995).

In a more general sense, it is incumbent upon psychotherapists to recognize that religion is a significant influence in the lives of the majority of Americans (Shafranske, 1996). Religion appears to be a significant cultural institution which provides meaning, affiliation, and support for many individuals. Shafranske (1996) cited a 1993 Gallup poll finding that college graduates reported lower salience of religious preference than those who had not attended college. For the current sample, however, religious preference is of very high salience despite a preponderance of college graduates.

This fact illustrates the importance of assessment of patients' religious beliefs within psychotherapy. Lovinger (1996) asserted that, “Although it is now recognized that ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural influences bear upon treatment and assessment, religion is one influence that is often overlooked in spite of its transection of these three other influences” (p. 327). Religious beliefs are associated with how one views a range of social and psychological phenomena, and should not be ignored or falsely understood.

Discussion of religious and spiritual practices and backgrounds can immeasurably deepen the psychotherapist’s understanding of patients’ lives, and can lead the way to more successful therapeutic interventions.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

Letter to Friends Meetings Clerks

Dear Mr__________:

I attend the _________ Friends Meeting, and am also a Ph.D. candidate in counseling psychology at Boston College. I am in the process of gathering data for my dissertation which concerns factors influencing stability and satisfaction in long-term Quaker marriages.

The study is described in greater detail on the enclosed flyer. To let people know about the study, I have asked permission of the clerks of the _______, ________, ________, and ________ meetings to make a brief announcement at the rise of meeting one Sunday. I'd like to visit the ________ meeting on Sunday, ____________ and make a similar announcement, and am asking your permission to do so.

Couples who have participated in the study thus far have noted that it provided them with the opportunity to deeply reflect upon their marriages. Participation is voluntary and all information is kept confidential. Participants are offered the opportunity to hear the results of the study either individually, or at their meetinghouse.

I will call next week to speak with you about the above proposal. Please feel free to contact me in the meantime with any questions or concerns. My phone number is __________, and my email address is ____________. I look forward to talking with you.

Very truly yours,

Jennifer Rapkin, Ed.M.
Appendix B
Participant Recruiting Flyer

ATTENTION!

QUAKER

MARRIED COUPLES

Married couples are asked to participate in a research study to determine variables associated with long-term, satisfying Quaker marriages. Each member of a volunteering couple will be interviewed separately (and confidentially) for approximately one hour. Interviews are semi-structured, and will occur at a time and place most convenient for participants.

Since this study involves long-term marriages, volunteers must meet the following criteria:

1. They are currently in a marriage of at least 20 years' duration.
2. Both members of the couple have been Quakers or attenders for at least 20 years.
3. The couple’s youngest child must be at least 18 years of age.

The interview questionnaire is designed to facilitate thoughtful reflection on the marital relationship, and how it has changed and remained the same over the years. In addition, the data will suggest ways in which Quaker beliefs and traditions affect people as individuals, and as married couples.

At a time when divorce rates are very high, it is imperative to discover those factors contributing to lasting marriages. I believe that volunteers will find their participation to be both fun and intellectually stimulating. The results of the study will hopefully be of interest to the larger Quaker community.

This research is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for my Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology at Boston College. I greatly appreciate your assistance, both in volunteering, and in identifying other couples who may be interested.

I welcome all questions and comments, and look forward to hearing from you. I can be reached at:

Jenny Rapkin

(Address, phone number and email address here)
Appendix C

Letter to Prospective Participants

Dear _________ and __________:

I have been an attender at the __________ Friends Meeting for about two years. I am a doctoral candidate in the Counseling Psychology program at Boston College, and am in the process of writing my dissertation. My research concerns how couples experience changes in marriage over time, and how they adapt to these changes. Specifically, I am interviewing Quaker couples married at least 20 years, who have been Meeting members or attenders for at least 20 years, and whose youngest child is at least 18 years old. The purpose of the interview is to share your ideas, feelings, and experiences concerning your marriage. I am hoping to identify qualities which have assisted couples married a long time to stay together.

Participation would involve each of you reading and signing an informed consent form which describes the project and its goals. I have attached a copy of this form. I believe that ______ also had a copy of an announcement of this project which was posted at the Meeting House. You would each be interviewed separately. Each interview is tape recorded and lasts between 1 ½ and 2 hours. You may choose not to respond to any particular question, and you are free to end the interview at any point. Your identity will be kept confidential, and will not be revealed in any reports generated by this study.

I would be happy to interview you in your home, or to meet at an agreed-upon place. I would also be pleased to answer any questions you may have about any aspect of this study. I will be calling you next week to determine your interest in participating in this study. If you'd like to call me before then, my phone number is:

Thank you very much for your time. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Jenny Rapkin
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I understand that the interview sessions with Jennifer Rapkin are part of the research for her doctoral dissertation under the direction of Dr. Bernard O'Brien of Boston College. The purpose of the research project is to aid in understanding factors contributing to marital stability in Quaker couples married at least 20 years. The purpose of the interview is for me to talk about my ideas, feelings and experiences with regard to my marriage.

Participation in the study is voluntary. I understand that the interview will be tape recorded. I realize that I may choose not to respond to any particular questions, that I may stop the interview at any time, and that I may request to listen to the tape. The information obtained from this tape will become part of the research material for this study. My identity will be kept confidential and will not be revealed in any reports generated by this study. All identifying information will be changed, and audiotapes will be destroyed immediately following transcription.

I understand that these interviews are not designed or intended to be psychotherapy or treatment of any sort. I understand that, while benefits of this study are hoped for, they are not guaranteed. I realize that I may ask about various aspects of the study, and that further information on the project will be provided at my request. Results of the study and summary of its findings will be available to me, either individually, or via presentation at my meeting at my request.

I have read this information and consent form, and agree to participate in this research study.

Signature ___________________________ Date ________________

I, Jennifer Rapkin, agree to respect the aforementioned conditions of this research study.

Signature ___________________________ Date ________________
Appendix E

Interview Guide: Quaker Couples

Introduction:

Thank you for being in the study. Brief explanation of the project. Read and sign consent form.

Explain structure of the interview:

1. Background information
2. Your marriage as it was when you were first married and how it has stayed the same as well as how it has changed in terms of roles, expectations, and needs.
3. The issue of being Quaker and the influence of cultural, religious, and socioeconomic factors on your marriage.
4. A look at your own family background and values and how these influenced your marriage.
5. The influence of your parents' marriage in your own marriage in terms of roles, expectations and relating.
6. Your assessment of the important factors in your marriage over time.

Background data:

Name: __________________________ Date of Birth: ____________

Occupation: ____________________ Income: ________________

Children:

Names Birth Date

Other People Living in the Home:

Names Relationship

Geographic Origins: ______________________

Date of Marriage: _______________________

Spouse's Name and Birthdate: _______________________

I. The Relationship
   A. Initial attraction, life circumstances, family reactions.
      1. As you look back to the time when you first met (spouse), what first attracted you to him/her? What do you think attracted him/her to you?
         a. What interests did you share?
         b. How long did you date before you decided to get married?
         c. Did any Quaker traditions influence your dating?
         d. How were you sure you wanted to marry (spouse)?
         e. Were you married under the care of a Quaker meeting?
            If so, how did that process affect your decision to get married to (spouse)?
      2. How did your family feel about and react to (spouse)?
Tell us about your family’s reaction to your marriage (feelings of approval or disapproval).

How did your family’s reaction affect your decision to marry (spouse)?

How did (spouse's) family react to the marriage?

a. How much of an impact did their reaction have on your plans to get married?

What was going on in your life around the time of your marriage educationally, vocationally, family, etc.?

a. Who did you live with when first married?

How did (spouse's) family react to the marriage?

a. How much of an impact did their reaction have on your plans to get married?

What was going on in your life around the time of your marriage educationally, vocationally, family, etc.?

a. Who did you live with when first married?

Roles, expectations, problem-solving, issues of relatedness and equity in the beginning, during child-rearing and post-child-rearing. (Ask the following questions in relation to the early years, the child-rearing, and the empty-nest years.)

1. Can you tell us how you and (spouse) got along?
   a. In general?
   b. What has been important to getting along? Sense of humor?
   c. How would you describe the communication between you?

2. How did you go about making decisions and solving problems?
   (Re: work, friends, recreation, where to live, etc.)
   a. How did you handle differences (values, career, sex, etc.)?
   b. How would you describe your problem-solving style as compared to (spouse’s)?
   c. Is there one particular area of conflict which stood out during each of the three phases of your marriage?
   d. Can you give us some examples of how you faced and dealt with crises (health, financial, etc.)?

3. How did you handle child-rearing responsibilities? (early, latency, adolescence)

4. How do you feel about your relationship?
   a. Looking back, what has been good, not so good, and/or bad about the relationship
   b. How much understanding do you feel (spouse) has had of you? (differentiation, separateness, etc.)
   c. How much understanding have you had of (spouse)?
   d. How sensitive has (spouse) been to you? And you to him/her?
   e. How much respect do you feel (spouse) has had for you? And you for him/her?
   f. How much trust have you felt for (spouse)?
   g. How much trust do you think (spouse) has felt towards you?
   h. How have you gotten along sexually? In terms of non-sexual intimacy like hugging and touching?

5. Overall, have you felt a sense of fairness in the marriage?
   a. Despite differences, have things balanced out?
   b. Do you feel that your ways of solving problems as a couple have been generally fair to each of you?
   c. Have there been situations where one of you had more influence than the other (money, friends, recreation, work, living, etc.)?

Socioeconomic Influences

How have the following played a role in your life together and how have they affected your marriage?

A. Religion
   1. How important has religion been in your life? What Quaker organizations, committees, and activities do you participate in? How regularly?
   2. How have your religious beliefs affected the way you cope with adversity?

B. Extended families.
   1. What influence has your family and your spouse’s family had on your marriage?

C. Cultural factors
   1. Do you feel that being a Quaker in America has affected your marriage?
2. How have you and (spouse) coped with discrimination?

D. Economic factors.
1. Do you feel that being a Quaker has affected your (or spouse’s) position in the workforce?
   If so, how?
   a. How did you and (spouse) handle situation?
   b. Did it affect your relationship in any way?
2. Do you feel that being a Quaker has ever made it hard to provide financially for your family?
   a. If yes, how did this affect your relationship with (spouse)?

E. Are there other values, beliefs, or moral standards that have played a role in your life together? (Is there a motto that fits for you?)
1. Are there any Quaker traditions or values that are part of your married/family life?

III. Parents’ Marriage
A. What was your family’s attitude toward/experience with divorce?
B. What did you learn about marriage from observing your parents?
   1. How did you view your parents’ relationship in terms of roles, relatedness, and equity?
   2. Can you tell us how your parents got along?
   3. How did they go about making decisions and solving problems? (Ask for some examples of how a disagreement was solved.)
      a. Despite differences, did things balance out in their marriage?
      b. Did you feel that their ways of solving problems were generally fair to each partner?
         Were there situations where one of them had more influence than the other (money, friends, work, etc.)?
C. What are some important similarities in your marriage compared to your parents’ marriage?
   1. What are some important differences?
   2. Did your parents have any Quaker traditions that were a part of their marriage?
      a. If yes, do you follow these traditions in your own marriage?

IV. Respondent’s Views of the Marriage Over Time and Wrap-up
A. As you look back, what were the personal qualities of (spouse) that kept you together?
   1. What other factors in the relationship kept you together?
   2. Were there any Quaker traditions that helped you to stay together?
B. In what ways has your marriage changed over the years? How has it remained the same?
   1. How have your expectations changed or remained the same?
      a. How does what you are currently looking for in the relationship differ from your earlier expectations? (needs, roles, relatedness, communication)
C. What words best describe what (spouse) means to you now? In the past?
D. Are there any other things that you wish to add that were critical issues or factors that kept you in the relationship? Significant events, periods of assessment and/or renewal?
E. Is there anything else that you think would be important for us to understand about your marriage, yourself, or your spouse?
   1. Anything else about your experience as a Quaker that would be important for us to know about?

Thank you!
Appendix F
Quaker Coding Sheet

25. Participant's perception of influence of Quakerism on initial attraction:
   (0) Absent    (1) Present

26. Participant's perception of influence of Quakerism on decision to marry:
   (0) Absent    (1) Present

27. Participant's perception of influence of Quakerism on marriage:
   (0) Absent    (1) Present
   (a) 1st phase
   (b) 2nd phase
   (c) 3rd phase

28. Participant's perception of influence of religion on his or her life:
   (0) None     (1) Negative    (2) Positive

29. Participant's perception of discrimination secondary to Quakerism:
   (0) Absent    (1) Present

30. Influence of Quaker community on participant's life:
    (0) None     (1) Negative    (2) Positive

31. Participation of participant in Quaker-related social concerns activities:
    (0) Inactive   (1) Active
    (a) 1st phase
    (b) 2nd phase
    (c) 3rd phase

32. Participant's perception of role of Quaker values in conflict resolution:
    (0) Not important    (1) Somewhat important    (2) Very important
    (a) 1st phase
    (b) 2nd phase
    (c) 3rd phase

33. Participant's perception of gender equality within relationship:
    (0) Absent    (1) Present
    (a) 1st phase
    (b) 2nd phase
    (c) 3rd phase