The Different Voices
of Separation and Divorce

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ABSTRACT

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The impact of marital separation and divorce on individuals varies widely, depending on a range of factors. These narratives of separation and divorce explain and clarify why couples break-up, how they negotiate their break-up, and with what consequences. Research is based on heterosexual marriages. I interviewed 12 individuals, 6 males and 6 females, who are separated or divorced. 2 of the 12 respondents were divorced twice, so there is a total of 14 cases, which were then divided into four groups: male and female initiators and non-initiators of separation/divorce. The different voices of divorce reflect both these variables, but also the quality of the courtship, rather than the duration, the relationship with the children and the financial consequences. My findings included that men were in general happier after divorce than the women, the women received custody of the children in all cases, but two cases of parental alienation syndrome were recorded, that happiness after divorce was affected by whether the individual initiated separation or not, that the quality of the sex related to divorce was plural, that the financial consequences for women depended on whether they initiated the separation or not. The voices are so different that further research is necessary.

"We are not meant to be monogamous, we are not made to be monogamous, very far from it. The way we are programmed is to go look around and get the best thing we can get. And we men are programmed to do it with anybody who wants to. So if we're programmed this way, how can a marriage work?

- David

"In a way I wish he would have done this earlier. I would have had a different life now. I think that for a woman in her 50s, it's harder to move on, but for men I think it's a new beginning."

- Mary

"I do have at least some times of my life where I'm happy, but I always have this black cloud following me and I do a lot of things that I enjoy and I do definitely enjoy life more, but it's almost as if there's always distractions, like this black cloud following me all the time."

- Tony

"At the beginning I thought: I've made my bed, and now I'm going to lay in it. I really thought I could do that. But then it just got to a point where I couldn't take it anymore."

- Lisa

"It was always fine because she was so in love with me."

- John

"A relationship is work, and that's not a lie, anyone is going to tell you that. It's easier to be alone. I mean if you can handle being alone and not letting loneliness get to you, but some people just can't."

- Andrew

"Pieces kept falling out of my heart."

- Catherine

Table of Contents

Introduction

The impact of marital separation and divorce on individuals varies widely, depending on a range of factors. These narratives of separation and divorce explain and clarify why couples break-up, how they negotiate their break-up, and with what consequences.

I will begin with a discussion on the theoretical background of marital separation and divorce in Chapter 1, followed by a brief review of the literature in Chapter 2, and an analysis of the methodology in Chapter 3.

I will continue to discuss how individuals verbalize their thoughts and experiences about their separation/divorce, and the similarities and differences between them. Due to the vast changes undergone within the institution of marriage, it is important to understand how marriage has now become 'individualized', as individuals' decisions to marry are based on personal fulfillment. As marriage has now become more "personalized", it is crucial to understand the complexity of each situation. Relying on an array of topics, I will discuss a variety of motives for marital dissolution and its different consequences. Rather than simply analyzing the reasons for separation and divorce, I will instead investigate the various stages leading to individuals' positions as separated/divorced. Given the small sample size, the results obviously are not generalizable to the larger Montreal, Quebec or Canadian populations. The results are indicative, not conclusive; these are the normal limits with small-scale qualitative research. There is also the perennial problem of credibility: not all respondents were equally credible about everything. This raises the issue of the relation between public

discourse and personal privacy. These narratives, therefore are the voices of divorce, in all their pain and complexity, and they do indicate paths for future research.

It is crucial to consider various aspects of the courtship in order to understand the nature of the marriage. This will be examined throughout Chapter 4: *"From Courtship to Court"* which is based on the following hypothesis: *the longer the courtship, the longer the marriage*. It is through this chapter that the key features of the courtship stage will be delineated for each case. Analyses for all respondents will then be compared and contrasted in order to detect any similarities and/or differences between them.

Subsequent to understanding the courtship phase for all cases, Chapter 5: *"Turning Points and Conflicts"* will discuss the length and nature of the courtship in relation to the motives for marital separation/divorce. Throughout this chapter, narratives will be provided from each respondent which will represent their individual thoughts and feelings about the deterioration, and later on, the ending of their marriages. This chapter outlines the various reasons for marital separation and divorce as they have been described by each individual. Each case will then be further scrutinized in relation to their narratives about the courtship phase of their relationships, which will then be used to evaluate hypotheses about the courtship and its effect on marriage.

Emotional consequences of each situation have been measured by individuals' happiness levels following the separation/divorce. Chapter 6 *"Emotional Consequences"* will be centered on the following hypothesis: *Initiators' level of happiness increase after a separation/divorce while non-initiators' level of happiness decrease following a separation/divorce*. As initiators decide to end their marriages, it is only logical to imply that they would remain happier once their marriages are over. As for non-initiators, it is

understandable that they would be devastated after their spouse ended the marriage. So chapter 6 analyzes these hypotheses in order to determine whether or not we should accept this static structure of initiators as happy, and non-initiators as sad, or instead come to realize that we should accept a more fluid understanding of the aftermath of marital separation/divorce.

Finally, the various social and financial consequences of marital dissolution will be outlined in chapter 7: *"Financial and Social Consequences."* As the previous chapter focuses on happiness levels based on individuals' overall emotions following their separation/divorce, this chapter will measure happiness levels in relation to financial and social consequences. Financial consequences have been categorized as either positive or negative, while social consequences were categorized as happy, sad, or ambiguous. Topics outlined in this chapter include: alimony, child support, relationship with children after separation/divorce, and *'P.A.S.'* (*parental alienation syndrome*) and will be discussed in relation to two hypotheses: First, *Initiators' financial consequences are positive after a separation/divorce, while consequences for non-initiators are negative, therefore those who are less financially stable will not initiate a divorce.* Secondly, *relationships with children deteriorate for the parent who did not receive full custody.* Narratives throughout this chapter will describe how initiators and non-initiators felt and dealt with the financial and social consequences of their separation/divorce.

Chapter 1

Theoretical Framework

This chapter will outline the various theories I have chosen in understanding the changes undergone within the institution of marriage in relation to marital separation/divorce. Mainly based on the works of Anthony Giddens, the following section will discuss marriage and divorce through the following topics: *'Theory of Structuration'*, *intimacy as democracy and the notion of autonomy, gender, and marriage as a personal choice.*

Gidden's Theory of Structuration

This theory is based on the idea of 'structure and agency' and how these structures - *i.e. traditions, beliefs, morals, values and rules* – stabilize society. Individuals act accordingly to these structures which have been enhanced throughout the socialization process. It is these human actions which are referred to as agency. However, Giddens (1984) focuses on social action and how human action is shaped through specific social and historical contexts. He argues that this contextualization of human action leads to the reproduction of other forms of action, which lead to the restructuring of established norms and rules of society. He refers to this as *'the duality of structure'* in that structuration does not simply consist of social action and institution, but instead it focuses on the reproduction of action which leads to the creation of new social activities, which thus recreate the rules and norms of society (Giddens, 1984: 2). Therefore, this 'duality' is based on the notion that the structure of society relies on human action and one cannot be separated from the other (Giddens, 1984: 374).

Giddens (1984) also conceptualizes this dualism through the macro/micro model. He sees these two concepts as relevant when analyzing the functionality of the duality of structuration (1984: 139). The notion of macro and micro and their influences on one another are predominant within Giddens' discussion on *Intimacy as Democracy* in "*The Transformation of Intimacy: Love, Sex and Eroticism in Modern Times.*" Here he argues that changes which occur within society as a whole (i.e. changes within the political sphere) lead to simultaneous changes within the more intimate aspects of individual life: "Intimacy implies a wholesale democratizing of the interpersonal domain, in a manner fully compatible with democracy in the public sphere (Giddens, 1992: 3)." Giddens (1992) mentions how the democratization of society has led to egalitarianism among men and women, which has thus led to gender equality within intimate relationships (Giddens, 1992 :1-2). Therefore, when analyzing this idea within the realm of marital separation, particularly when analyzing women as initiators, we see that women have become more autonomous in that they make decisions which are directly related to their well-being. There is no longer a direct focus towards the domestic sphere, but instead, women have also learned to take care of themselves and pursue what makes them happy. Also, men have been dislocated from their roles as sole providers and they too decide to separate from their wives, and sometimes their children as well and, as a result, women are the ones taking care of themselves and their children. Feminist movements have simultaneously led to the equality of women within the political realm of society, as well as their equality within marriage and other intimate relationships. Gay marriage is one way to portray the restructuring of marital norms as a result of human social action (Coontz, 2005: 277). However, when focusing on marital separation, once again, it is

evident that women gained more authority and power in that they have the ability to leave their husbands if they are unhappy. Norms of society regarding the workforce have extended to include women, which is another significant example about how individuals, as social actors, restructure the constitution of society. Through these re-established norms, women were entitled to participate in the labour force and this may also be a significant factor when analyzing marital separation: "...women gained increased financial independence because of their unprecedented entry into the workplace...in 1970 for the first time in history the majority of women were employed" (Braver, 1998: 141). As families became restructured into 'dual income families', there has been a restructuring of the institution of marriage as well, in that one of the reasons for separation and divorce is conflicting work schedules and lack of leisure time spent together (Braver, 1998: 139; Coontz, 2005:266) The idea of the changing roles of men and women and the effects this has had on marriage will be further discussed in the upcoming sections of this chapter.

Therefore, Giddens' theory of micro/macro is that the two concepts should not be seen in opposition to one another, but instead, dependent on one another (Giddens, 1984: 139).

> The old dualisms – action/structure, individual/society...should be conceived as *dualities*; in other words, instead of separate and opposing things in the world or as mutually exclusive ways of thinking about the world, they are simply two sides of the same coin (Craib,1992: 3).

Therefore, when relating this analogy to marital separation, it is clear that the significant changes within society as a whole, affect society on an individual level as well. The following section will focus on the idea of "*Intimacy as Democracy*", along with the

concept of *autonomy* in order to explain the changes undergone within the institution of marriage.

Intimacy as Democracy and the Notion of Autonomy

Giddens' discussion on the democratization of private life is extremely relevant to the topic of the changing institution of marriage. He argues that the changes within the personal spheres of life are affected by general transformations within society. When he refers to the democratization of the private sphere, he defines the term 'democratization' in its political sense, and thus relates it to the notion of intimacy "...[democracy is] concerned to secure 'free and equal relations' between individuals in such a way as to promote certain outcomes" (Giddens, 1992: 185). Giddens discusses the idea of *Intimacy as Democracy* in order to argue that changes which occur within society as a whole (i.e. changes within the political sphere) lead to simultaneous changes within the more intimate aspects of individual life. Giddens uses egalitarian movements as the primary example. He mentions how these political movements led to equality among men and women, which eventually led to gender equality within intimate relationships (Giddens, 1992: 1-2). He writes: "Intimacy implies a wholesale democratizing of the interpersonal domain, in a manner fully compatible with democracy in the public sphere" (1992: 3).This idea consists of a paradoxical nature in that both public and private spheres of society are directly affected by social change.

An important aspect when exploring the democratization of the private sphere is that of autonomy. Through this aspect emerges the possibility of equal rights as individuals

7

have the freedom to make their own decisions and actively make choices to enhance their well-being:

> Individuals should be free and equal in the determination of the conditions of their own lives; that is, they should enjoy equal rights (and, accordingly, equal obligations) in the specification of the framework which generates and limits the opportunities available to them, so long as they do not deploy this framework to negate the rights of others (Giddens, 1992: 186).

This idea reiterates the argument that changes within the realm of gender have an effect on the intimate aspects of individual life. A democratized society leads to the opportunity for individuals themselves to become more autonomous in making their own choices, which would eventually lead to self-fulfillment. If traditional gender values are present within society, then it is not possible for individuals to experience such autonomy (Giddens, 1992: 185). Democracy entails freedom of expression of feelings, and desires. This notion also focuses on the idea of that individuals have the ability to discuss their preferences, which are not ranked among others' preferences, but instead considered equal among one another. The notion of democracy in relation to autonomy is directly related to the most recent form of marriage based on individualism.

Within traditional societies, men and women had strong gender ideologies based on a binary structure as they each played their specific role within the institution of marriage. As various social changes have emerged, there have been significant changes within the institution of marriage. Couples are now faced with the task of re-negotiating behaviour and tasks, which thus move away from traditional gender roles (Cherlin, 2004: 848). Giddens is thus arguing the idea of reflexivity between larger and more general structures of society, with more local structures. "The global and the local intersect in complex ways and selfhood must be understood in reflexive relation to current

institutional transformations" (McGuigan, 1999: 97). This notion of reflexivity portrays how changes within the wider scope of society affect society on an individual level as well. The subsequent section will delineate the notion of gender egalitarian movements as social change in relation to the changing forms of marriage and intimate relationships.

Gender

One way of analyzing the democratization of private life in relation to marriage is through gender. The 'free and equal relations' between individuals, mentioned in the previous section, may refer to the democratization between husband and wife as there is no longer a division of labour based on gender. Instead, both men and women have a choice as to which tasks – both inside and outside the household - they will be responsible for. Traditionally, there was a strict division of labour among men and women as men's roles were restricted to the paid labour force, while women's roles were restricted to the domestic sphere (Coontz 2005: 155). Through this division of labour among men and women, marriage was thus seen as a way of 'completing' one another: "When these two spheres were brought together in marriage, they produced a well-rounded whole" (Coontz 2005: 156). The following section will thus portray how the materialization of different societal norms has led to the shift from traditional forms of marriage based on romantic love and companionship, to the emergence of non-traditional forms such as individualized marriage.

The transformation of gender roles has is an important aspect when analyzing the changing structure of marriage. Throughout traditional marriage, gender ideologies strongly revolved around the division of gender roles. "The most extreme conceptual formulation of the traditional family system should be one in which its unity would be

determined entirely by the traditional rules and regulations, specified duties and obligations ..." (Burgess et al., 1971: 8). Patriarchy has been predominant throughout earlier, more traditional forms of marriage, which led to male's roles as providers and female's roles as nurturers. These roles have been strongly divided among men and women, thus reinforcing the binary structure of gender and gender ideologies.

Postmodern feminist Judith Butler has argued that society should alter the perception of gender by moving away from the binary structure of male and female and instead acknowledge that male and female roles may in fact coincide with one another (1990; 2004). This attitude towards gender is what led to changes within the marital sphere: "...it has been important to deconstruct patriarchal identities and struggle for new, liberated identities" (McGuigan, 86). Post-traditional marriage, on the other hand, is not composed of these distinctive gender roles, but instead it is based on the flexibility of roles which, in turn, are not determined by gender. This notion of the transformation within gender identities in relation to the changes within gender roles is a dominant theme within individualized marriage, and will be further analyzed throughout subsequent sections of this paper.

The following quote illustrates the changes in gender ideologies in relation to post-traditional marriage:

Each man and woman brings to a new marriage certain expectations about their role, their partner's role, whether to have children, desired lifestyle, relationships with friends and relatives, where they will live, how they will divide household labour, and the kinds of work each will do to contribute to the maintenance of the shared household (Bedard, 1992: 33).

This implies that gender roles within marriage are no longer prescribed through gender. Instead, changes within gender ideologies have led to the negotiation of tasks and

other duties within marital relationships. One way to explain how the changes within gender roles have affected the realm of marriage is the emergence of dual-income families:

> An increasing number of wives were working in the paid labor force, and men were being urged to share some of the unpaid domestic duties that had earlier been regarded as "women's work." These shifts meant a weakening of the traditional sex roles on which patriarchal families rely, and on which male authority over women is based, both in the family and in society generally (Bedard, 1992: 12).

As women began entering the paid labour force, earning money for the family was no longer strictly a male's responsibility. Males were no longer the sole providers for the family, and therefore, men and women were now expected to divide household tasks among each other. Although there has been much discussion over the years about women's "double shift" – as in women working in the paid labour force and then returning home after work to complete household chores as well – the same has occurred for males, as they are now obliged to fulfill their duties both as financial providers and as caregivers.

The following section will elaborate on the concept of gender in relation to marriage by discussing *gender egalitarianism* as social change in relation to the transformations in structures and meanings of marriage.

Marriage and Social Change: Gender Egalitarianism

As gender is one of the most plausible tools in comparing traditional and non-traditional structures and beliefs towards marriage, it is crucial to examine the notion of gender egalitarianism as the most significant form of social change in regards to marital relationships.

The Women's Movement has struggled to eliminate the subordination of women. Consequently, women have gained more autonomy and independence within political, economical, and social domains of life. This has impacted on marriage in that "...women today are spending less of their lives in traditional family living arrangements" (Bedard, 1992: 209). Women are less dependent on men as they are able to pursue their own careers, feel less pressured to get married, spend less time in marriages when they become unhappy, have less children as child bearing is no longer considered a priority for many women – "[a]ll of these changes point to the emergence of woman as an individual with a life of her own – not a life lived simply as an adjunct of her male partner" (Bedard, 1992:210).

Feminists were not on a quest to conquer men, but instead, their goal was to eliminate the prominence of the patriarchal system so that women may become independent and autonomous. Thus, their objective was strictly based on resistance to patriarchy (Bedard, 1992: 206). The notion of feminism has been identified, sometimes unfortunately as hatred of men; thus, it is crucial that we turn to a discussion on women's movements because it does not simply focus on the idea of women's domination, but it also pays considerable attention to the notion of egalitarianism. Individuals who supported these movements were in favour of moving away from patriarchal family structures, and instead towards more egalitarian structures. Feminism sought to make these changes not only between husbands and wives, but they also fought to obtain equality throughout economic, political and social spheres. "For those of us committed to an egalitarian and democratic society, naming our own reality and then speaking that truth courageously is the essence of progressive social change" (Bedard, 1992: 204). The

Women's Movement has led to simultaneous changes for society as whole as well as for intimate aspects of individual life – such as marriage.

The emergence of the Women's Movement revolutionized gender roles, and as a result, males and females repositioned their roles both inside and outside the domestic sphere. There was no longer a strict division of roles between husband and wife in that sometimes women eventually became providers for their families while sometimes men became nurturers. Relating the consequences of the women's movement back to marriage, it is evident that shifts towards these ideologies will alter the way males and females interact within relationships as they have become more equalized.

Giddens (1992) defines he most recent shift within the realm of marriage through the concept of the 'pure relationship':

...a situation where a social relation (which may also include marriage) is entered into for its own sake, for what can be derived by each person from a sustained association with another; and which is continued only in so far as it is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfactions for each individual to stay within it (58).

Hence, this reiterates the argument that marriage has transformed into a structure based on individual fulfillment and satisfaction. This portrays how various forms of social change have led to vital changes in gender ideologies, which have led to the emergence of the most recent form of individualized marriage. Gender roles play an important factor within the institution of marriage. Men and women are no longer confined to their respective roles within and outside the household. Women are becoming more career-oriented and more involved in the labour force which has thus altered men's identification with the breadwinner role. Here, the concept of "autonomy" is important as prior to women's involvement in the labour force, men were the ones who remained the sole providers for the family. However, now that women are becoming more

economically independent, they are thus increasing their level of autonomy, which has had a significant impact on male identity.

Marriage as a Personal Choice

This section will examine the structural and ideological changes within the institution of marriage. More specifically, it will focus on the shift from traditional to post-traditional marriage. These shifts portray the changes within individuals' ideologies towards marriage, and how this realm has become reassessed throughout the various changes within society. Traditional marriage is based on the notion of romantic love, and later on, companionship, while non-traditional forms revolve around individualism. The following section will operationalize these marital transitions which will be referred to throughout the essay.

The shift which will be referred to throughout this essay is that of traditional marriage towards non-traditional. Some discussion will be provided for companionate marriage, which later on led to the emergence of individualized marriage (Cherlin, 2004). There have been other shifts prior to this, however it is through this shift that the changes in gender roles and ideologies are most significant. This specific transformation strongly represents social change as a fundamental variable leading to these changes within gender roles, which concurrently transformed patterns and attitudes within the institution of marriage.

According to Bedard, ideologies about traditional marriage "...involve a hierarchical conception of familial relationships..., sharp dichotomization of sex roles, and the like" (1992: 15). Throughout traditional marriages, there is a clear division between male and females roles both within and outside the household. During the

1950's, a more democratized structure of marriage emerged: companionate marriage (Cherlin, 2004). According to Burgess et al., companionate marriage is best defined through four main aspects: marriage is based on affection; both husband and wife have a mutual understanding of the procedures in decision-making; major decisions are based on mutual agreement; and finally, husband and wife have a common understanding and acceptance of the division of labour (1971: 9). In addition, companionate marriage was based on a patriarchal system in that men remained breadwinners, while women secured their roles within the domestic sphere, hence implying that it may still be categorized as a traditional form (Burgess et al., 1971; Cherlin, 2004).

The shift from traditional and companionate marriage towards individualized marriage may be described through the changes in gender roles, which were consequences of social changes happening throughout the mid 1960's and early 1970's (McGuigan, 1999: 120). As discussed in previous sections of this chapter, egalitarian movements, such as the Women's Movement, is an example of social change and will be further discussed throughout later sections of this paper. Individualized marriage is based on the idea of personal satisfaction and individual expression. This type of marriage emerged throughout the late 1960's and continues to exist within present-day society (Cherlin, 2004). The average age of marriage has increased, which suggests that individuals are prioritizing their own well-being and financial stability over the idea of having their own families. Before entering into marriage, individuals assure that they develop a fulfilling, independent self instead of merely sacrificing oneself to one's partner (Cherlin, 2004: 852). Once individuals are married, there occurs the negotiation of roles both inside and outside the household, as these marriages are now based on a

dual income structure. Individuals are no longer satisfied solely through the relationships they have with their spouses, but instead through their own accomplishment of individual goals and aspirations.. Thus, the shift from companionate marriage to individualized marriage may be described as "…a shift in emphasis from role to self" (Cherlin, 2004: 852).

Shifting away from traditional ideologies, the institution of marriage is now based on personal choice. It has become more fluid as individuals negotiate and make various decisions about how they want their marriages to be. Giddens describes marriage as "…a world of sexual negotiation, of 'relationships', in which new terminologies of 'commitment' and 'intimacy' have come to the fore" (1992:8).

Marriage being based on personal choice thus implies that the crucial phase of any relationship should be the courtship, as it is through this stage that individuals determine whether or not they are compatible with one another. Chapter 4 will analyze whether or not there is any consistency between the nature of the courtship and the nature of the marriage. If marriage is now based on personal choice, then we can imply that marriages in today's society should last longer as individuals now have the chance to determine which partner they are most compatible with.

The structural and ideological changes within the institution of marriage have become revamped simultaneously. In order to systematically analyze the transformation of a societal institution, one must acknowledge the importance of combining both human social action along with societal structures. Furthermore, this notion was analyzed throughout the dichotomized structure of society as occupying both public and private spheres. This is where Giddens' discussion of 'Intimacy as Democracy' was applied. The

underlying premise of this notion was the effects of political social changes (i.e. egalitarian movements) towards intimate aspects of individual life. Here, Giddens' discusses the 'democratization' of personal relationships, which was expressed in relation to the various changes within the realm of marriage.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

The institution of marriage has undergone vast changes throughout the 20th century. It is imperative to understand the changes within this institution as they are accountable for the high divorce rates in today's society. Current research covers general findings in the area of marital separation and divorce, however, what I am concerned with is the differences found within each situation of marital dissolution. The following chapter will provide an explanation of the significant shifts undergone within the institution of marriage, followed by a brief literature review of each of the following topics: *individualized marriage, sex*, and *love*.

Cherlin (2004) refers to the changes within the institution of marriage as the *"deinstitutionalization of marriage"*. In the beginning of his article, Cherlin relies on the works of Ernest Burgess in order to describe the first major transition within the institution of marriage: from institutional marriage to companionate marriage (2004: 848). However, what I am concerned with is the second shift, the one towards "...individualized marriage in which the emphasis on personal choice and self-development expanded" (Cherlin, 2004: 848). The following section will aim to explain how this second shift, from companionate marriage to individualized marriage, has led to the significant rise in divorce rates.

Prior to discussing this second shift, it is relevant to include a brief discussion on the meaning of companionate marriage. Giddens (1992) describes companionate marriage as follows: "The level of sexual involvement of the spouses with each other is

low, but some degree of equality and mutual sympathy is built into the relationship...organized in terms of a model of friendship" (155). This form of marriage portrays a limited degree of equality and focuses on the importance of friendship and compatibility, with little attention to sex. As will be discussed further in this section, sex becomes important when analyzing the shift from companionate marriage towards individualized marriage as individuals focus on sexual gratification as an important factor in measuring marital quality.

The following section will discuss how marriage has become based on personal choice. Therefore the main focus will be on the shift towards *individualized marriage*.

Individualized Marriage

When people evaluated how satisfied they were with their marriages, they began to think more in terms of the development of their own sense of self and the expression of their feelings, as opposed to the satisfaction they gained through building a family and playing the roles of spouse and parent. The result was a transition from the companionate marriage to what we might call the *individualized marriage* (Cherlin 2004: 852).

Hopper states that "...initiators began articulating a common vocabulary of motives [for separation/divorce]...a vocabulary that emphasized individualism" (1993b: 807). Initiators strive for personal fulfillment and therefore measure marital quality through the level of satisfaction they acquire from their marriages. As these individuals become unsatisfied, which may be for a number of reasons (i.e. lack of affection from spouse, alcohol/drug abuse, incompatibility, etc) they decide to leave their spouse. On the other hand, non-initiators portray strong morals and values regarding marriage and the family, and desire commitment and long-lasting marriages Hopper (1993). Through this, we can say that initiators tend to focus more on individualized marriage, while non-initiators, having strong beliefs about marriage and the family, are the ones who support

more traditional forms of marriage. One aspect which may be taken for granted when examining marital separation is the idea that both individuals agree on who the initiator was (Hopper, 1993). Hopper (1993) mentions that "...as [divorced individuals] looked back and described the long history of marital trouble, all of these divorcing people described multiple complaints that they had about their marriages, which they factored into explanations as to why their marriages fell apart" (1993b: 805-806). Available research portrays that women are most often the initiators of separation (Braver, 1998; Booth & White, 1980).

> ...female[s] [were] more likely to end a relationship...because women are more likely to play socio-emotional roles, they are more sensitive to deterioration in relationships and make more accurate judgments about the probability of a continued relationship (Booth & White, 1980: 609).

Braver describes the factors for men and women, which they felt were important in determining the breakdown of a marriage (1998: 139). Although a few of these overlap for both genders, we see that women place more importance on emotional factors, while men tend to focus more on factors of control and autonomy. Braver's findings were as follows:

Men and women both ranked the two most important factors as the gradual growing apart from one another, and conflict in lifestyle preferences. The third factor for men was based on constant arguing among spouses, while women perceived lack of feelings of appreciation from spouse as third. Both genders ranked the spouse as incapable of fulfilling major needs as fourth. The fifth aspect for men was wife's infidelity, while women specified husband's inability to express emotion. This fifth factor strongly portrays the differences between gender roles in that men focus more on sexuality, while

women are more sensitive towards emotional fulfillment. Men then ranked feeling neglected and unappreciated by spouse, and women stated husband's infidelity. It is clear here how men consider extramarital sex to be more important than emotions, and vice versa for women. The seventh factor for men was based on spouse's jealousy towards them or their activities, while women regarded constant fighting as more important. The eighth factor for men is based on wife's strong dependence on her own family – which shows how men give more importance to feelings of control or loyalty in that they want to be the ones who their wives solely love. Women's eighth most important reason for separation was feeling degraded by their husbands. The ninth positions were problems with sexual intimacy for men, and unreliability of husband for women. Finally, the tenth reason for separation for men was wife's anger and constant demanding while women chose conflicts in roles for both household and outside household chores.

When examining Braver's differences in rankings for reasons for marital separation, we see that males and females place importance on the different factors. Although rankings were not identical, we are still able to conclude that men and women, in some way do tie importance to the similar aspects, however, not to the same degree.

As described in the previous chapter, the changing roles of men and women have had a significant impact towards the changes within marital relationships, which have led to the increasing number of divorces within today's society. According to Cherlin, this is described as the 'deinstitutionalization' of marriage (2004: 848).

The democratization of marriage has been messy. People with more choices have more chances to make bad decisions as well as good ones. When a couple has to negotiate because the husband cannot simply impose his will, there is a chance that negotiations will break down. When both partners can have equally important but conflicting career trajectories or life goals, even the most loving couple may come to a parting of the ways. The bad news is that the institution of marriage will never again be as universal or stable

as it was when marriage was the only viable option. But that is also the good news (Coontz 2005: 301).

Gender roles have now become more fluid as men and women are no longer restricted to their respective roles. Instead, gender roles have become more fluid, and as a result, this has led to considerable changes within the institution of marriage. The division of gender roles has become subjective as individuals must negotiate their roles as they are no longer taken for granted (Cherlin, 2004: 848). The main reason for this change in the traditional structure of gender roles is the rise in the number of married women entering the labour force, thus decreasing the role of men as the breadwinner and women as the homemaker. The fact that women have become more financially independent has shifted the way women view marriage as they no longer feel the need to rely on men as providers. "Women could more easily afford to divorce when they were unhappy, whereas in earlier decades they were often forced to stay in unfulfilling marriages" (Braver 1998: 141).

Coontz (2005) raises an interesting point about personalized marriage, and how it becomes "customized" by individuals: "Now men and women can customize their life course. They can pick and choose whether they want to marry at all, when they want to marry, whether they want children, how many children they want, and when they want them" (301). In today's society, there is no fixed age as to when individuals are to marry. Ages at marriage for women range from 20's to 60's (Coontz 2005: 284). One factor used to explain this is that women who earn higher wages are more likely to marry at an older age in comparison to women with less education and less earnings. (Coontz 2005: 285). "...women can acquire an education, earn their own livings, do not need men for economic support, raise children alone or with massive state support" (Synnott, 2005:

51)... It is important to understand that the reasons for this shift within the institution of marriage is not solely based on the idea of gender roles, but also on other general aspects, including sex and love. The following section will thus explain how the changes within sex and love contribute to the shift from companionate to individualized marriage.

Sex

Coontz describes the transition from companionate to individualized marriage as a shift from *sentimental* to *sexual* marriage, which shows that there has been a shift towards sexual fulfillment (2005: 196). This emphasis on sexual satisfaction is a significant way of analyzing how individualism and personal fulfillment have now become the foundation of marriage. Coontz (2005) mentions that it there has been an overall shift from family values towards individual values and how marital quality is now based on the importance of sexual satisfaction (224).

There has been a shift in attitudes about sex, and it is noteworthy to analyze these shifts, specifically those for women. Much emphasis has been towards women's changing attitudes which have moved away from ideas of marriage and procreation and instead towards sexual pleasure. Through this, there have been considerable changes in sexual behaviour, which have affected the realm of marriage. Women have become more aware of their sexuality and it is important to understand how women began fantasizing about sexual passion (Coontz, 2005: 198).

...observers worried about the future of marriage, and with some reason. The boundaries between men's and women's spheres of activity had been blurred. The doctrine of sexual purity had fallen by the wayside. The combined assaults of sexual freedom and women's political emancipation seemed likely to topple marriage from its recently installed place as the center of people's emotional commitments. One observer complained that modern teachings were leading to "the wreck of love," as sex and love became "so accessible, so un-mysterious, and so free" that they were trivialized (Coontz, 2005:201)

23

As women gained more sexual freedom, they no longer based their decision to get married on the idea of having a family and raising children. Instead, they based their decision to marry on a number of factors, one being that of sexual fulfillment. Women thus acquired the freedom to experiment their sexuality with as many partners as they wanted until they found the one man who was able to fulfill them. Of course there is a downside to this: as stated in Coontz's quote, this may lead to "the wreck of love" as marriage is no longer centered on people's emotions.

The spread of birth control is another way of analyzing the transformations in sexual attitudes in relation to the institution of marriage. Women were no longer obligated to remaining chaste and thus had the opportunity to seek sexual variety with multiple partners. As sex became an essential component for a stable marriage, then it is important to understand that individuals had to experience their sexuality before selecting a partner for marriage (Coontz, 2005: 204).

When relating the concept of sex to individualized marriage, and increased divorce rates, it is crucial to analyze the topic of infidelity. The evolution of sexuality in terms of behaviours and attitudes may be one way to explain the significant changes within marital relationships. As men and women gain sexual freedom, they become less constrained to marriage, and thus feel free to escape unhappy marriages.

One narrative which I found rather interesting and worth mentioning is David's and his perception about monogamy and marriage:

"We are not meant to be monogamous, we are not made to be monogamous, very far from it, ok so women, after they have a kid with someone, I mean it's beautiful and everything, but once that kid comes out, the interest for that man, now it's over, they 're now looking for another man to give them that same good feeling, it's all subconscious, I

mean, you had what you wanted from this one, you don't need it anymore. I mean, you can force yourself, you know, tell yourself "he's a good man, and whatever". But probably the way we are programmed is to go look around and get the best thing you can get. And we men are programmed to do it with anybody who wants to. So anybody who wants to, we do it and that's any man. So if we're programmed this way, how can a marriage work? For me I think people should live together, when they're tired, they can leave, and there would be less friction. But I mean, it's really tough for the kids, but otherwise, it would be nothing. Because if you're married and you don't have kids and them you split up who gives a shit."

David has completely rejected traditional ideologies of marriage. Through the abovementioned narrative, the shifts in views about marriage towards personal fulfillment are ever-present. He mentions that humans are not meant to remain monogamous, and that women marry for the simple sake of bearing children. Once that aspect of women's lives is fulfilled, they lose interest in the man and thus feel the need to go out and find somebody else. David mentions that although all women feel this way, they don't do anything about it and instead force themselves to remain with their husbands. It is interesting to learn how people in today's society think about marriage, as their views are no longer based on the linear structure of love, marriage, children, grandchildren, etc. Instead, individuals in today's society express a more flexible understanding of marriage, as sometimes there is marriage without love, children without marriage, marriage without children, children before marriage, love and no children, and so on. Before discussing the concept of love, the following section will focus on infidelity as an example of the changes in sexual attitudes and their contribution to the rise of separation and divorce.

Infidelity

One of the leading causes for divorce in today's society is the rise in extramarital affairs (Buss: 2003; Previti & Amato 2004). Infidelity is the perfect example when

portraying the growing emphasis towards sexual gratification for both men and women and how this has led to the deterioration of many marriages. As my data shows, there were a range of reasons for separation and divorce, however, infidelity was the main reason for the majority of cases, appearing 4 times out of 12 (note that 3 out of the 4 cases are male infidelities – See *Appendix 3*). It is relevant to analyze the various perceptions of male and female sexuality in order to understand the notion of infidelity. The following section will provide a brief analysis of male and female infidelity which will contribute to the understanding of infidelity as a motive for marital separation and divorce.

Infidelity poses various threats towards a marriage, one of them being the loss of trust, which, in most cases, leads to divorce. In the study conducted by Previti & Amato (2004), infidelity was a strong and consistent predictor of divorce (218). A study conducted by South and Lloyd (1995) stated that in over 1/3rd of all marriages which ended in divorce, one spouse engaged in extramarital intercourse during the time of their marriage (Previti & Amato, 218).

Recent research shows that there are different motives for infidelity, which have led to the operationalization of two main types: emotional infidelity and sexual infidelity. Barta & Kiene defined this dichotomized structure of infidelity as follows: "…emotional infidelity…exists when a dyadic partner experiences the feeling of being in love with an extra-pair partner" (2005: 341). They defined sexual infidelity as "… a behaviour motivated by the desire for a novel sexual experience, and not by the desire to find a compatible long-term partner" (Barta & Kiene 2005: 342). Therefore, in order to delineate these two categories, emotional infidelity is based on having strong feelings for

and the desire to pursue long-term relationships with someone other than their partner/spouse. Sexual infidelity, on the other hand, is based on physiological sexual drives and the desire to engage in extramarital sex, without intentions of pursuing any form of commitment with that other person. These two types of infidelity have been categorized in terms of gender in that men simply do it for pleasure while women do it for love and sometimes pursue intimate and committed relationships with their extramarital partners (Sprecher, 1998: 5). Prior to exploring the notion of gendered infidelity, it would be helpful to outline some statistics for infidelity rates among men and women.

When analyzing various data over the years, we see that infidelity has been and still is more common within men's lives. A 1991 General Social Survey (GSS), [the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago], gathered data from a sample of 1212 respondents. The sample included individuals who have been previously married (divorced, widowed, or separated), along with individuals who were still married. These respondents were asked the following question: "Have you ever had sex with someone other than your husband or wife while you were married" (Greeley, 1994: 2)? Results were as follows: 11% of females and 21% of males , who were presently married at the time of the survey, mentioned that they have engaged in extramarital intercourse with someone else; 16% of divorced females and 33% of divorced males admitted to sex with someone other than their spouse while they were married; lastly, for individuals who were separated from their spouses, 35% of women and 57% of males stated that they have engaged in sex with someone else while they were married (Greeley, 1994: 2). Evidently, there is a difference in percentages when

comparing individuals who were married at the time of the survey to those who were separated or divorced. As far as reliability is concerned, percentages for individuals who were separated or divorced during the time of the survey should be considered most accurate. There is significant difference in the numbers, as those married showed lower percentages when compared to those who were not married, therefore we can imply that some were not telling the truth. However, the fact that males do engage in extramarital affairs more often than women is ever present within this sample. In the article entitled *"Is Infidelity a Cause or a Consequence of Poor Marital Quality?"* Previti & Amato (2004) state the following findings through a study conducted from a national probability sample: 24.5% of all men and 15% of all women reported having extramarital intercourse (218). "...the finding that extramarital sex is more common among husbands than wives appears frequently" (Previti & Amato, 2004: 218). Considering the consistency within the data, it is obvious that the practice of extramarital sex is more prevalent among males, however this does not mean that we should ignore the fact that women also pursue extramarital affairs.

Infidelity and its differences among males and females are an outcome of socialization. Men have been raised to sleep with as many females as possible in order to gain 'social acceptance', while women, on the other hand, are raised to be 'chaste' (Spreecher, 1998). There are diverse expectations towards males and females with regards to sexual behaviour. Societal norms have re-enforced the notion that it is universally acceptable for men to act promiscuously, while women have always been expected to remain 'innocent'. This can explain the variation within the rates of sexual infidelity among males and females. Sprecher (1998) mentions how men were

encouraged to engage in as much sexual activity as they can with multiple partners, while women have always been encouraged to pursue committed relationships (2). The "*Hite Report of Male Sexuality*" argues that one of the effects of socialization towards males is that they are 'trained' in terms of not expressing emotions: "Men should not hurt, cry, openly display affection, or react to emotion" (1981: 54). This gives evidence to the idea that men engage in extramarital affairs not for emotional motives, but for sexual satisfaction.

The fact that women also engage in extramarital affairs should not be ignored. When referring to women's situations, it may also be concluded that one of the reasons why women engage in extramarital affairs is because they are unhappy in their current marriages (Wolfe, 1975: 242). Therefore, extramarital affairs may occur to elevate a woman's morale, or simply in search for emotional support. This portrays women's desire to fulfill emotional needs and that they strive to attain utter emotional happiness. What we have witnessed in cases for males is their longing for sexual fulfillment.

This section aimed to portray how the changes in sexual attitudes along with the idea of personal fulfillment may sometimes lead to infidelity, which has become one of the leading causes of divorce in today's society. This is one idea which contributes to the understanding of the changing structures of marriage"...infidelity is bound up with trust, intimacy and respect; an incident of extramarital infidelity can damage the emotional foundation on which a marriage is built" (Previti & Amato, 219). The following section will describe this shift towards individualized marriage through the concept of love.

Love

As the transition from companionate to individualized marriage has been discussed, it is noteworthy to analyze the concept of love and its different meanings in relation to marriage. This section will begin by discussing its various meanings, and later on explore respondents' narratives and how they expressed their ideas about love.

Previti and Amato (2003) define love as: "having strong feelings of love and affection" (566). This definition is extremely vague as there is no mention of the various types of love. When referring to this definition of love, it can be applied to all areas of life i.e. relationship love, the love for a child/parent, sibling love, friendship love, etc. Previti and Amato also describe the concept of friendship, which they defined as "feeling comfortable together, getting along well, spending time with one another" (Previti and Amato 2003: 566). When looking at this definition of friendship, one may also use this to describe a marriage.

According to Jacquet and Surra (2001), there are two types of love: passionate love and friendship love (628). They claim that it is these two types which are found among romantic relationships, therefore, we can conclude that marriage follows this structure of love, which is made up of both friendship and passion. Companionate marriage, as described in the previous section, is based on friendship, while personalized marriage is based on fulfilling sexual, emotional, economical, and social needs.

When thinking about marriage, we assume that couples get married because they are "in love". However, this may not necessarily be the case: "Marriage sometimes has little to do with love: marriages of convenience are well-known. And love has little to do with marriage (Synnott 2007: 6)." The concept 'liquid love', coined by Bauman (2003),

explains changes in society lead to simultaneous changes within intimate relationships. This type of love is relevant to the notion of marital separation and divorce as it can be used as one of the most plausible ways of describing the changes undergone within the marital realm. Examples of how institutional changes have led to changes within relationships are stated in Synnott's article: high dependency on the pill as a form of birth control therefore leading to lower fertility rates, which led to the increase in the number of women participating in the labour force; the increase in government support and welfare, which all lead to susceptibility of marriages towards separation and divorce (Synnott: 2007, 8). All of the abovementioned examples are results of the changed ideology towards individualism: from family to self.

The next section will delineate the different ways in which respondents expressed their ideas about love, which will show how there is no one way of defining the concept.

John describes love as a 'comfort':

> "I think it was a comfort thing for both of us, you know, I felt comfortable knowing that there was someone there that loved me"

When discussing the concept of love for his first marriage, **David** describes love as passion:

> "If you've ever been in love, you know what love is and then you know what love isn't. It was never hot....you know like that aw! it was never passionate."

Here he mentioned that there was no love in his first marriage. When describing his second marriage, **David** speaks about love as something which is to be earned by a partner:

"Not that everything was good, it was just different. I think she earned my love, she made me love her, you know what I mean? She did everything right. I mean, every step, she earned it."

Andrew explained that loving each other is not enough to sustain a marriage. Instead, he mentions the importance of loving each other as well as having similar beliefs and values about marriage.

"We loved each other, there's no doubt about that….but you can't just love each other, I can tell you that much…we just had different images of what a marriage should be…"

Steve focused on the importance of showing love and affection:

"…there's no intimacy, there's no affection, we're not making love, we're not doing this, we're not doing that…' I'd say there's no intimacy…then I'd say 'you're not giving me enough affection' And I would say, you know 'maybe if we did this'…"

Marc, similar to Steve's description of the concept of love, explains that love is based on affection and intimacy between husband and wife:

"…one of the reasons why I decided to break up the marriage is because all these years…she seemed to be a little bit cold in some ways, non receptive…uhh…and this kept on, but I figured well things are gonna change, she'll see my point of view, but of course, you cannot change a person. So therefore I just accepted it."

For **Jessica's** first marriage (to David), there was no mention of the concept of love. Instead her main focus was on the concept of communication and how the lack of communication led to the deterioration of their marriage:

"Well overall, you know, like every other couple, passion was great at the beginning, but then it fades away. We just….we drifted apart. We didn't really have too much communication…"

When speaking about her second marriage, Jessica conceptualizes the concept of love as passionate:

> "...that was like a fairytale...love at first sight. Actually, it wasn't love at first sight because I knew him, but it was very passionate, and so different from my first marriage."

This is interesting considering that David also used the term "passion" to describe love. Here we see that Jessica and David had the same perception of love, however they did feel this love towards one another. David mentioned that there never existed this idea of "passion" within his marriage with Jessica, while she explained that there was passion, but that it was only present within the initial stages of their marriage.

Catherine describes love as attachment and spending time together:

> "I never wanted him to go with his friends...I was too attached to him, wanted him to stay with me...we used to do everything together."

Lisa stated that she is not even sure what love is. She said that she wasn't even sure she loved her husband in the first place:

> "I did love him, you know....what I thought was love, you know what I'm saying?... I don't know if ...you know, love is an enormous word, but as much as I cared about him, I don't know if I loved him enough to marry him... Looking back on it, I don't know if, cuz to love somebody for the rest of your life ...I, I don't know if I was feeling that."

For **Anne**'s case, she mentioned the following:

> "...towards the end I lost a lot of trust. And when you lose a lot of trust in a marriage, it's very hard. After that, to love the person in the same way...I mean, I loved him as a person, but I couldn't love him as a husband anymore... The love of another person, sharing a life with someone, being able to be honest with someone ...you know, I miss not talking to a man, I'm beginning to realize this now, I have friends, but it's not the same, I mean, even the affection, the attention..."

Here, Anne describes the concept of love as being based on trust. She mentions how she felt betrayed, and because of this she was unable to love her husband as she felt betrayed by his alcohol and drug problem.

The remaining narratives include:

Tony: "But I think I was in love with the idea of being in love."

Mary: "What hurt too was that he said that he never loved me."

All narratives portray an array of meanings and understandings of the concept of love. Some focused on the importance of affection and intimacy, while others focused on ideas of passion, trust and attention. A few respondents mentioned that they were unsure about their understanding about love and were not sure whether or not they were in love to begin with. There is no one true meaning of love, but instead a range of meanings based on individuals' specific feelings and experiences.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Prior to commencing my research, I established five hypotheses, which will be analyzed throughout the remaining chapters. The hypotheses are listed below:

(a) COURTSHIP –

- *The longer the courtship, the longer the marriage.*

(b) SEX –

- *The better the sex life, the better the marriage*

(c) LEVEL OF HAPPINESS AFTER SEPARATION/DIVORCE –

- *Initiators' levels of happiness increase after a separation/divorce while non-initiators' levels of happiness decrease following a separation/divorce.*

(d) FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES –

- *Initiators' financial consequences are positive, while non-initiators consequences are negative, therefore those who are less financially stable will not initiate a separation/divorce.*

(e) SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES –

- *Relationships with children deteriorate for the parent who did not receive full custody.*

Evidently, these hypotheses portray a linear association as each situation is expected to lead to one specific consequence. However, what my research has instead proven is that each situation does not necessarily lead to the same consequence, hence my title: *"The Different Voices of Separation and Divorce"*. Each section will thus portray how all separations/divorces differ from one another. This will be scrutinized through an array of concepts which will be further discussed through upcoming chapters. Each concept and its hypothesis will be discussed through four chapters entitled: *Courtship and Marriage, Turning Points and Conflict, Emotional Consequences,* and *Social and Financial Consequences.* I have created four groups upon which I will base my analyses: female initiators, female non-initiators, male initiators, and male non-initiators.

Subsequent to completing my research, I have instead come to realize that there is not so much a difference between male and female experiences per se, but instead, an array of diverse thoughts and feelings throughout all twelve respondents. Before discussing my findings, it is relevant to include a brief examination of the methodology and theoretical framework of my research.

Research will include **semi-structured interviews** as they will allow respondents to elaborate specific details about their experiences of marital separation and/or divorce. Interviews will be semi-structured in that I will be addressing questions related to numerous issues of marital separation and divorce, which will thus allow respondents to speak about their particular experiences. Questions will address the following issues: courtship, development and deterioration of the marriage and social and financial consequences of separation and/or divorce. These, however, are but general areas of analysis which will be further explicated throughout the interview process. As interviews

progress into more of a conversational structure, I will be asking participants questions which are immediately associated with their own individual experiences, therefore allowing interviews to carry out the specificities of each case. I will ensure that all questions are asked in order to address all issues, however, questions will not necessarily be identical, nor will issues be addressed in the same order.

When analyzing narratives, I will take into consideration various aspects pertaining to socioeconomic status - racial and ethnic background, class, age. Each of these characteristics will be kept in mind as general ideas to consider while scrutinizing each case. For example, if it is mentioned throughout a narrative that the source of marital separation was due to high work demands and conflicting schedules between spouses, then it would be necessary to take the notion of class into consideration for this analysis.

I have many friends whose parents are separated or divorced, and I also have a few friends who are divorced themselves who I have asked to participate in my research. Also, I will ask these individuals to ask their friends or family members who are separated or divorced if they would be interested in participating. Part of my selection method will thus be based on snowball sampling. My sample may also be referred to as a *convenience sample.* My sample will be more or less equally distributed among the following groups: female and male initiators, female and male non-initiators, and gender-neutral couples.

When interviewing couples for gender-neutral marital separation, I will be interviewing both spouses simultaneously. Questions asked will be identical to the questions asked throughout interviews with male and female initiators and non-initiators,

which will be based on the causes for their separation in order to determine whether or not they agree on similar reasons and the results. Furthermore, questions pertaining to affects of marital separation will also be addressed. So far I have not been able to pursue this section of my research as I am unable to recruit both individuals who have been part of a "neutral divorce", therefore my research is based on the remaining four categories: female-initiators, female non-initiators, male initiators, and male non-initiators.

Tensions in the Interview Process

I have experienced some tensions in the interview process. Before commencing my interviews, I was unaware of the potential problems in interviewing individuals of the opposite sex. One of my participants continuously mentioned how attractive he thought I was and thought that it would be a good idea for us to go out for a drink sometime. This made me extremely uncomfortable as I was unprepared to deal with such a situation. I kindly brushed him off and carried on with the interview. However, he continued to insist on how we should go out and how he has been looking for a girl like me, and once again mentioned how he thought I was attractive and intelligent. His exact words were "You're beautiful and nice and slim". At this point I was extremely uncomfortable, not only because I was in his home and he was a complete stranger, but also because this man was old enough to be my father – actually, he was only a few years younger than my father and had a daughter almost my age.

In one instance, one of the men I interviewed was previously married to a woman half his age. We began with the interview, and more than once he offered me wine, and other types of alcoholic beverages. I gently refused and continued with the interview. When we got into the topic of sex, he tried to turn the conversation around and asked me

if I had a boyfriend. I told him I didn't and he then began to ask me questions about my past relationships, including questions about my sex life, which I refused to answer.

I was completely oblivious about this sort of situation prior to beginning interviews. I cannot help but feel that this is partially my fault as I offered to go to the interviewee's house rather than meet public places such as café's and restaurants. The reason I did this was because I feel that individuals are more at ease in their own homes and I wouldn't want them to feel uncomfortable in a public place and feel that others may be listening to what they are saying.

Another tension which is noteworthy to mention is that I have become skeptical about my respondents telling me the truth. In one instance I have spoken to both spouses and consequently acquired two different stories. Through this I am able to infer that one of the respondents was distorting the truth. Considering that the divorce was based on the husband's infidelity, it is plausible to infer that it was the woman who was telling me the truth. I have therefore become sceptical about all other respondents as I will never be 100% positive that they are revealing the entire truth.

Another reason why I feel this way is because there is one respondent in particular who was unable to give me a reason for her marital separation. She was the one who left her husband, however, she was unable to give me a reason as to why she did so. She described it as "falling out of love". I continuously asked her to try to remember a situation which may have triggered her to feel this way, and all she was able to tell me was "…there was just nothing there anymore, that's the best way I can explain it. I cared for him, I still do, but when it comes to love, like there should be between husband and wife, that disappeared years ago, you know." This respondent mentioned that she fell out

of love, but as the interview progressed, she said that there wasn't any love to begin with. Therefore, I became suspicious because she began changing her story throughout the interview.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Qualitative Research

Qualitative researchers have the opportunity to explore different cases which are based on specific contexts. Through qualitative research, researchers can analyze individuals' situations in depth. They have the ability to ask an array of questions pertaining to their area of study. Qualitative research, such as semi-structured interviews and focus groups, make room for much discussion, which is advantageous because the researcher will be able to understand the details of each case. Another important aspect of using qualitative research is that the researcher becomes the 'voice' of their respondents, and thus the voice of 'experience'. Through qualitative methods, researches are able to give voice to their respondents' narratives, and this is an important aspect of this form of research. These are extremely significant aspects of qualitative research practices.

However, there are a few shortcomings in using qualitative research. The following will briefly list these disadvantages. When I asked people if they wanted to participate, initially they agreed, but when I informed them that they will be tape recorded, they declined and mentioned that it would make them feel uncomfortable. After hearing this, I attempted to explain that their information would remain confidential and anonymous and that I will be the only person who would listen to the tape. I also mentioned that I will be keeping the recording only until it has been transcribed, which was usually done the day after so that the next interview may be recorded. In the

meantime, I will be keeping these tapes in a safe place where nobody, except for myself, would have access to them. After explaining this to some of my prospective participants, a few of them agreed to participate, while others mentioned that they needed time to think about it. Another problem with the interview process is that it is time consuming in that they may last several hours. Once interviews are completed, transcribing is also a lengthy process.

Qualitative research allows a thorough examination of a few cases. Individuals have the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings openly with the researcher. It is important to recognize the particular contexts (i.e. social, cultural, temporal) – which lead to the understanding of detailed attitudes and feelings about these individuals' experiences. However, using a limited number of cases will restrict researchers from making any generalizations about the phenomenon in question. Although researchers acquire thorough understandings of specific cases through empirical research, they are nevertheless denied the ability to create one common theory which will be generally applicable to that particular phenomenon under study.

Also, when conducting interviews and focus groups, the researcher must be sure to acquire the precise meaning of what the respondent is revealing: "…interviewers are deeply and unavoidably implicated in creating meanings that ostensibly reside within respondents…meaning…is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter" (Sinding & Aronson, 2003: 97). We have to assure that intended and precise meanings of participants will be included in the discussion of participants' narratives. When interpreting responses and listening to what participants have to say, researchers must be certain not to judge this content on the basis of his/her particular standpoint i.e.

racial and ethnic background, sex, class, age, and so on. Instead, researchers must be sure to grasp the exact and intended meanings of what the respondent is saying to them. This leads to the notion of 'vulnerability'. Vulnerability is a result of the combination of individual narratives within the wider frame of societal discourse" (Sinding & Aronson, 2003: 110). Respondents' ideas will thus be analyzed and compared within the wider scope of society – which then allows their stories to be classified within the common views of society. I am not implying here that narratives become generalized, but instead it is this 'public discourse' which leads to their susceptibility in terms of the misinterpretation of their meanings. These alterations in the meanings of narratives and individual discourses may thus lead to misrepresentations of participants' identities (Sinding & Aronson, 2003: 110). Researchers ought to be sure that they are portraying the character and personality of the participant as they were intended to. The limitations of qualitative research may also be observed in combination with the particular subject under study, which may be analyzed through ethical concerns.

Ethical Concerns

There are some ethical concerns when researching marital separation. One of the possible obstacles is the idea that individuals who are separated or divorced for reasons such as abuse – whether it be alcohol/physical/emotional abuse, or other issues such as gambling – participants may not feel at ease speaking to the researcher about these problems. This discomfort may come from both sides when analyzing situations where abuse was the cause of separation in that the abuser or the victim may experience awkwardness when face to face with the researcher. Also, when referring to individuals who were abusive, adulterous, etc, I must take into consideration that they will be self-

censoring in that many of these individuals will not admit that these were the reasons for their separation/divorce.

Another aspect which should be taken into consideration is the question of the truth. When researching intimate topics, researchers constantly struggle with the idea that respondents may not be telling the truth. There is also a possibility that respondents are revealing but partial truths about their feelings and experiences of marital dissolution.

When exploring matrimonial issues, there are intimate topics which need to be discussed. For instance, sexual intimacy is an important feature when analyzing marital separation, therefore individuals would be obliged to speak to the researcher about any problems they may have experienced in terms of their sex lives with their spouse. Some individuals are not comfortable speaking about these intimate aspects of their lives. Another issue is the notion of infidelity. If some couples are separated or divorced as a result of adultery, then these individuals may not want to disclose too many details about this experience. It may also be possible that the other spouse is not yet aware that the other is having an affair, therefore, they do not want to provide too many details in that they may not feel comfortable speaking about their extramarital affairs.

Non-initiators may not feel comfortable speaking about their 'rejection' – in that they may feel belittled and embarrassed about their situation. All these are issues which any researcher on marital separation relations has to cope with, and there are no easy answers.

Chapter 4

From Courtship to Court

This chapter will focus on the first hypothesis stated in the methodology section: *the longer the courtship, the longer the marriage.* In theory one would say that the longer two people date and get to know each other, the longer the marriage will last, as it is throughout courtship that individuals learn about one another and eventually decide whether or not they want to get married. The following chapter will thus provide an analysis of each case in order to test the reliability of this hypothesis. Respondents were asked to provide a brief description of their courtship, including how long they dated along with the nature of their premarital relationship.

My first respondent, **Lisa** was married for 17 years. Her courtship was described as follows:

> "...the courtship was very short...and so 6 months, and then another 6 months to make the wedding plans and everything, you know, so I figure by the time we got married it was about a year in all. I can't say we had any problems...everything was fine."

Lisa's courtship was brief as they were engaged six months after they met, and married six months later. As she elaborated about her courtship throughout the interview, she mentioned that there were no inherent problems which may have anticipated their break-up. However, considering the length of the courtship, it may be concluded that there was simply not enough time for problems to arise.

Jessica was married for 11 years. They moved in together during the first year of the courtship, and were married one year later. Therefore, the courtship lasted for about 2 years:

> "I met him...he was my hairdresser...uh, the courtship was fine, the dating was fine, we even lived together for a little while before we were married... Uh...it was actually very good ...the living together. I got pregnant and got married right after, as soon as we found out that I was pregnant......we got married."

Jessica mentions that there were no apparent problems throughout the courtship. However, the interesting aspect about this narrative is how she emphasized the fact that she got married right after she learned about her pregnancy. As I had the chance to interview her ex-husband **David**, the following narrative will illustrate how he expressed their courtship, and later on, their decision to marry.

> "So we lived together, I don't think we ever, we ever really were head over heels about each other, I mean even now, looking back, it was just a comfortable relation, it was good for me, it was good for her. She was probably on a rebound, I was probably on a rebound, so things were just perfect but maybe not for the right reasons, you know. And she got pregnant with our first child, and we decided to get married. It was never tremendously beautiful relationship, it was always very distant, I can't say that it was, you know, the best of unions. And...the re-occurring problem...I don't know, I think we were just not compatible."

In this case, the nature of the courtship directly represents the nature of the marriage. As her pregnancy influenced their decision to get married, David described the marriage as a 'marriage of convenience'. As he continued to describe the courtship, he mentioned their 'incompatibility' as a couple and that it was simply a relationship based on comfort for the both of them. Neither of the two respondents mentioned the concept of love when describing the courtship.

The following case will illustrate how unexpected problems arose within the initial years of marriage, something which could not have been predicted throughout the courtship. **Anne**, a female initiator, dated her ex-husband for 7 years. Because of her

husband's drug and alcohol problem, she was forced to leave him after 15 years of marriage. The follow is an overall description of their courtship:

> "It was rocky, we used to argue a lot and make up and argue, we even left each other and got back together, you know. So I would say it was pretty rocky, it wasn't always smooth. But we loved each other, no matter what we always managed. And then when we got married…"

Throughout this narrative, it is evident that the couple experienced 'ups and downs' during their 7 years of courtship. Despite their arguments and break-ups, Anne mentioned that they loved each other and decided to get married. However, it is not so much a question about how well they knew each other, nor was the separation based on the nature of the courtship. Instead, their marital break-up was based on something out of her control, and because of this, Anne was forced to leave her husband.

Tanya and her ex-husband dated for about 3 years and were married for 20 years. The following narrative will provide a description of their courtship:

> "It was calm, I didn't know any better actually I was 17. He was 21…he was calm, mellow and you know, went with the flow and never stressed me out, and were always together, you know, at work, because we used to work together, and everyone would be like 'oh, look at the lovey-dovey couple'. But he was not much of a communication type… and I just tried not to let that bother me."

This narrative portrays a somewhat negative tone as Tanya placed much emphasis on their personality differences. What is interesting about this is that she accepted these differences as being 'part of life', thus implying that life, and relationships are not always perfect. Later on throughout the marriage, Tanya was unable to deal with their opposing personalities, and therefore decided to leave her husband. This situation portrays how problems which were present in the courtship phase later on became the reason for their marital separation.

The courtship for **Jessica**'s second marriage is different from all other cases: there was no courtship. She explained how he was an acquaintance from a wedding she attended (out of the country), and that they had brief long distance relationship before she decided to move there and get married. Their marriage lasted 4 years. Throughout the interview, she said that there was no courtship and that she married him instantaneously because that was the only way she was able to live within him:

> "I think I married on the rebound because I didn't really know him that well. Had we been in the same city, I don't think it would have been a marriage. If I would have really gotten to know him, I probably wouldn't have married him....but because it was long distance I never really got to know him until I lived with him. And the only way I can be with him is to marry him so I could live outside the country.

The important aspect here is that she mentioned that she would not have married him if she would have had the chance to have a courtship with him while living in the same city. It was as if they were getting to know each other while they were married. There was a side of him which was unveiled throughout their marriage, a side of him she was unaware of.

Catherine dated her ex-husband for 4 years, and was married for 21 years.

> "He was following me like a puppy, in love with me...I never wanted him to go with his friends...I was too attached to him, wanted him to stay with me...we used to do everything together. Then when I was 19, we decided we should get engaged..."

Catherine's narrative portrays a sort of 'perfect relationship'. In her case there was no mention of any arguments or problems within the courtship. In fact, their courtship seems flawless as she does not mention anything which may have caused any inconvenience throughout their marriage.

Mary mentioned that she dated her ex-husband for almost 2 years before they got married. They were married for 30 years. She provided a somewhat positive description of the courtship:

> "It was loving, fine, it was a whole new culture for me, I wasn't familiar with his cultural family values, they way they did things. It was a very intimate family, a very....the type of family where everybody knew what everybody else was doing...whereas, on my side, it wasn't the same. My mother was very strongly pushing me not to marry an immigrant. But it's not like we had any arguments, it was just more of a culture shock..."

The first thing that came to mind when scrutinizing this case was the idea behind 'Similarity Theory'. Logically, one would say that similarities in age, ethnicity, family SES, religion, attractiveness are factors which influence individuals to date one another. However, this was not the case for Mary as the reoccurring aspect throughout her description of the courtship was the cultural differences between herself and her ex-husband. She used the term "culture shock" to describe the apparent differences between them, and continues to mention how her mother was disappointed with the fact that she decided to marry an immigrant. She also described the inherent differences in the nature of his family in comparison to her family and how she was forced to adapt to these differences.

Marc mentioned that he dated his ex-wife for about 3 years before they were married. The difference between himself and his ex-wife was their cultural background. Marc was married for 30 years.

> "...we got to know each other 2-3 yrs before we got married....we got to know each other because we were together at teacher's college. The only differences that existed were the cultural differences, so there were a few adjustments to make on both sides. There were unpleasant things, you know, but I would just brush them aside..."

Steve dated his ex-wife for 4 ½ years, and was married for 21 years.

> "....we didn't argue, it was a good relationship. I'm very laid back...it just went along...it was a good relationship...easy going."

Steve dated his ex-wife for quite some time before they were married. Evidently, the courtship was unproblematic and comfortable as there is no sign of negativity or dissatisfaction throughout the narrative.

Similar to Steve's courtship, **David** dated his second wife for 4 years. However, his marriage lasted 7 years, which is 1/3 of the total number of years Steve's marriage lasted. When comparing these two cases, it is evident that the number of years of courtship has no effect towards the duration of the marriage. Here is how David described the courtship:

> "...with her the relationship was amazing... we were together everyday from day one, you know. That was a fire relationship, more passion and everything. But there was love, there was hate, everything was done with more passion...it was very different from the relationship I had with my first wife while we were dating."

Once again, the similarities between Steve and David are noticeable, as David also explains the courtship as trouble-free and enjoyable.

The following respondent, **Tony**, dated his ex-wife for about 5 years, and they were married for 20. The numbers are similar to Steve's situation (courtship lasted 4 ½ years and was married for 21 years), however, the difference remains within the nature of the courtship. Throughout the interview, Tony explained how he had to move out of the province for 6 months and she went with him, and so they lived together for 6 months. As

he elaborated, he began speaking about the inherent problems within the courtship, which were due to his wife's character:

> "During the courtship everything was fine, we did a lot of activities together, social activities, sports and things like that...we communicated well...whenever we had problems like she was always victimized by some situation or whatever and I kind of felt sorry for her, but you know I went on and she had that habit of being the victim all the time, you know it was an habitual thing, it wasn't that she actually was the victim all the time, she just always made it look that way."

The following two cases are similar in the sense that the courtship lasted longer than the marriage. First, **Andrew** said that he dated his ex-wife for 3 years, and was married for 8 months. Regardless of the problematic nature of their courtship, Andrew and his girlfriend got married.

> "In our 3 years of dating, we had maybe 1 or 2 huge fights....we weren't a couple who was always fighting. It's just that she had her principles, she wouldn't bend on any, she wouldn't compromise."

John's situation is comparable to Andrew's as John's courtship lasted longer than the marriage – 6 times longer. He dated his ex-wife for 6 years, and for 2 out of these 6 years they were living together. Their marriage ended after one year. Here is how he described the courtship:

> "Well, we always argued, she was pretty explosive, she was very uh, I mean it was both of us but she was quite high energy and very moody, and I enjoyed this I guess, somewhat... she just, she just had some issues... everything came crashing down basically when she, basically right when she met me. Like basically everything started going bad for her, and things started to built up, and....so this became problematic."

John's interpretation of the courtship is based on his ex-wife's issues which, in turn, caused many arguments between them. Regardless of these problems, John married her in hope that things were going to change.

Considering this analysis, it is evident that there is no association between the number of years of courtship and the length of the marriage. As a result, my research rejects the hypothesis raised in the methodology section (*Chapter 3*), which states: *the longer the courtship, the longer the marriage*. Also, it is evident that living together before getting married does not decrease the likelihood of separation and divorce, as much as we would like to think that it does. From numerous years of courtship to no courtship at all, there is an inconsistency in the number of years each couple dated and how long each marriage lasted (see *Appendix 2*). Lengths of courtships were defined as follows: short courtships lasted 0 – 2 years, and long courtships last 3 + years. The irregularity in the number of years each couple dated in relation to the duration of the marriage is further described through the following analysis:

The longest courtship in this sample was Anne's, which lasted 7 years. Respondents with the longest marriages did not necessarily have the longest courtships. For instance, Mary dated her ex-husband for only 2 years and was married for 30. Respondents who were married for 20 to 21 years had courtships between 3 and 5 years. Jessica, the only respondent who completely eliminated the courtship stage, was married for 4 years. This is interesting when comparing her situation to others in the sample, especially those who were married for less than 4 years. The second longest courtship in this sample was John's, which lasted 6 years, and he was only married for one year. Andrew's courtship was also longer than his marriage as he dated his ex-wife for 3 years and was married for only 8 months. These two cases are interesting, as the courtship lasted longer than the marriage itself. For the remaining cases, the years of marriage range from 7-17 years, and the years of courtship varied from 1 year to 7 years. What is

interesting about this is that Lisa, being married for 17 years, had a courtship of only 1 year. David was married for 7 years, and dated his ex-wife for 4 years. These inconsistencies portrayed throughout my research have shown that the length of the courtship in fact does not have any effect towards the duration of the marriage.

It is not so much the length of the courtship but its nature which determines the length and quality of a marriage. One exception to this hypothesis is the unexpected problem which appeared throughout Anne's marriage. In this case, the nature of the courtship should not be used as a variable to measure marital quality, as her husband's drug and alcohol abuse did not begin until years after they were married. Other exceptions include Catherine and Steve, as their narratives do not allow any predictions of marital breakdown. Each case will be further analyzed through the following chapter which will discuss the courtship phase in relation to the turning points and conflicts which have led to marital dissolution.

Chapter 5

<u>Turning Points and Conflicts</u>

"We loved each other, there's no doubt about that....but you can't just love each other, I can tell you that much. Ok, so I guess besides the fact that we loved each other, we just had different values and beliefs, we just had different images of what a marriage should be...I thought it was 'hi honey', give her a kiss, go do my thing and come back. So basically, I would describe our marriage as conflict. Love for each other....different expectations."

- Andrew

This section will analyze the various turning points and conflicts which have led to the deterioration of each marriage. It is necessary to understand that each situation is different as most cases present different reasons for marital separation and divorce. The following reasons for separation and divorce emerged from the 12 interviews: falling out of love, personality differences, drug and alcohol abuse, infidelity *(which was the most common, appearing in 4 out of the 14 cases)*, incompatibility, possessiveness, lack of affection from spouse, postpartum depression, boredom, different values *(religion and family)* and spouse's job (see *Appendix 4*). It is interesting to see the numerous motives for marital break-up which appear throughout all 14 cases, as there are 11 causes of separation and divorce. The following section will delve into these 11 causes of marital separation and divorce by analyzing narratives of each respondent when asked to describe their marital breakdown. Respondents were asked the following questions: *When did it begin to go wrong? What was the main turning point/conflict which led to the separation/divorce?*

When **Lisa** was asked "*when did it begin to go wrong?*" she initially mentioned "*falling out of love*" as the main reason for her break-up. However, as she continued to express herself, she mentioned that she was unsure as to whether or not she was in love

with him in the first place. As Lisa elaborated on the turning points and conflicts of her marriage, she focused on the initial phases of their relationship and mentioned how she never had the opportunity to leave the country, and because her ex-husband was planning to move overseas to come to work in Canada, she figured it would be a great opportunity to start a new life with him in a different country. The fact that she was faced with "the chance of a lifetime", had an enormous impact on her decision to marry him. As she was born and raised in Spain without any opportunities to leave the country, Lisa felt as though marrying her ex-husband would allow a chance to leave the country and explore a new life with him.

> "I feel I felt out of love, but then again I don't mean this in a bad way, but I don't know if …you know, love is an enormous word, but as much as I cared about him, I don't know if I loved him enough to marry him. I was very naïve and I thought uh …you know, at 22 "oh! I'll go to Canada, we'll get married and have a nice house, and have kids, and uh, everything is going to be fine" then I don't know….you know what I mean? Looking back on it, I don't know if, because to love somebody for the rest of your life …I, I don't know if I was feeling that….for me it was more like a big adventure. It got to a point where, I just didn't feel anything for him anymore."

Although Lisa stated "falling out of love" as the main reason for their marital break-up, there seems to be some ambiguity throughout her narrative: she begins by mentioning that she fell out of love with him, but as she continues, she says that she's not sure if she was in love with him in the first place. This narrative clearly portray the idea that she got married for the wrong reasons, and this is what should have been considered the most questionable aspect of their marriage. As an initiator, Lisa revealed that she left her husband because her love for him deteriorated until she eventually realized that she no longer loved him.

Tanya, another female initiator, stated *"personality differences"* as the main reason for marital dissolution. Tanya and her ex-husband had what she referred to numerous times throughout the interview, clashing personalities, which were present throughout both the courtship and the initial phases of their marriage. Although she chose to ignore these differences in the beginning of their marriage, she later on realized that her marriage was not perfect and that their personality differences had a significant effect on their marital quality.

> "...as I mentioned before, he was not much of a communication type, but I was always on the go with my friends. I was always out, more bubbly, my ex was more the type to be at home, listen to music, stay in his room, in his little cocoon. So I figured 'oh, it's ok, it's part of life.' He was a calm guy...he let me do whatever I wanted, but I wanted more, I wanted a MAN. And I eventually started to not feel good about things and uh...and I guess during our marriage, when I turned 30 I began to change and I started to realize things and I started to make excuses, like 'he's tired' and things like that..."

Tanya's narrative illustrates how there was always this difference between them, however, she ignored it for many years, until she was no longer able to live with him. Although she was aware of their "clashing personalities" while they were dating, she learned to accept it and mentioned that she was young and naïve and that *"it's part of life"*.

The motive for marital separation for **Anne** was her ex-husband's drug and alcohol addiction. Although she had strong feelings for him, his substance abuse left her with no choice but to end her marriage:

> "He had alcohol problems...and drug problems, so for me it was a very difficult problem to overcome, and it's not like I didn't want to help him.....like, when you get married it's for better or for worse, and I did take the worse, but after a while how long are you willing to take that...you know? I wanted to lead a normal life, because I found that after a while what becomes dysfunctional becomes normal, because I was so used to it and I figured 'this is the life' and it isn't... But the

thing was he didn't work at his issues and problems, it became our problem all the time. So after a while I realized there's no hope, he's not going to change, and this is something that I need to do, make this decision and move on."

Throughout the interview with Anne, she continuously mentioned how she tried to help her ex-husband overcome his substance abuse, and that it was gradually destroying their marriage. She stuck by him for as long as she was able to, until she realized that there was nothing more she can do and that the situation was becoming hopeless. This caused much difficulty for her as she still loved her husband very much.

Although *infidelity* appears as the most common motive, it is important to analyze each situation in its specificity in order to delineate the precise reason for infidelity. It is interesting to see that individuals who spoke about infidelity as the cause of their break-up were victims of infidelity. This was the case for all four respondents: Jessica Catherine, Mary, and John. It is also interesting to analyze the differences in happiness levels for all four individuals after their separation/divorce – which will be further discussed throughout *Chapter 6*, entitled *"Emotional Consequences"* The main findings for all four respondents in terms of happiness levels were that the three females remained unhappy after their separations, while the only respondent who portrayed feelings of happiness after being a victim of adultery was John. This indicates that happiness levels after separations or divorces based on infidelity are not necessarily lower.

The act of adultery is sometimes used as an intentional means of ending a problematic marriage. Sometimes it is difficult for individuals to approach their spouses and discuss the fact that they want to end the marriage, therefore they attempt to end the marriage by simply engaging in an affair and intentionally allowing their spouse to find out. In this case, adultery is considered a means of escaping an unhappy marriage.

Mary's case is the best example of this. As her ex-husband was negligent in terms of hiding the fact that he was having an affair with another woman, Mary understood that his actions were intentional in that he wanted her to find out.

> "...he probably didn't have the guts to come out and say anything. He probably wanted to make life so miserable to the point where he would want me to give up and say 'ok I'm leaving' he probably wanted me to leave him."

During the initial phases of her husband's affair, Mary was able to detect significant changes within his lifestyle, which led her to discover that he was having an affair with another woman. As Mary was always the one who handled the bills for the both of them, she began noticing many changes, such as: unfamiliar numbers on his cellular phone bill, unusual purchases on his credit card, etc. Another way she discovered his affair was because he would say that he was going out to walk the dog, and instead she would see him sitting in front of the house talking on his cellular phone. So it is obvious that he was clumsy in hiding the fact that he was having an affair with another woman. As Mary was unaware of her husband's unhappiness within their marriage, learning about her husband's affair was a shock to her.

> "Uh, there was a marriage break-down, he began having an affair with someone. And he said at that point that he didn't love me anymore. And he said at that point that he wanted to go out and live on his own. But when he did move out and all this happened, he wanted space, but what he really wanted was space with her. I thought it was a happy marriage, that's why it was such a shock to me."

John also mentioned that his ex-wife was unhappy and that this is what led to her adulterous acts. The following narrative will demonstrate how John's ex-wife made it obvious that she was thinking about leaving him for someone else.

> "She came home every night that week, like instead of being home her usual time, at 6:30pm, she'd come home at like 8:30pm. Another time was when we went to bed and she went into the bathroom and she was there for a while, and then I went

into the kitchen and she was there on the computer writing him an email. I'd see her email accounts and stuff, I mean, we'd open each other's emails she'd know all my passwords, I'd know all of hers, he'd write her."

John's ex-wife was the one who initiated the separation, however, through her actions and her clumsiness in hiding her affair, we can conclude that she wanted him to initiate the separation. Here is how John described his ex-wife's infidelity as the reason for divorce:

"she ended up leaving me and going back to live with her boyfriend that she had in Prep school. She went back to something that was comfortable for her…there was this guy who would never stop caring for her …from boarding school, she hadn't seen him in 10 years, she uh, left me and moved down there and she was married a month and a half later…"

The aspect of infidelity for Jessica's case deserves deeper scrutiny. Jessica and David were married for about 11 years. Throughout the last 3 years of their marriage, they were living in separate rooms – Jessica was living on the main floor, while David was living in the basement. Therefore, the deterioration of the marriage continued for 3 years, until David finally decided to leave her. Throughout her interview, Jessica continuously mentioned that there was no married life between them during the 3 years prior to their separation, and that their marriage was over before David left her. When Jessica was interviewed, she stated her husband's adultery as the main reason for their separation:

"…eventually David met someone else. The marriage ended before, but we were still in the same house."

According to Jessica, the reason for their marriage break up was mainly because David met another woman during the time that their marriage began to deteriorate, and so she felt as though he finally left her for that other woman. David, on the other hand, stated

"incompatibility" as the motive for separation and divorce. Although he did mention that he met someone while he was still with Jessica, he did not describe it as adultery because he said that he did not pursue a relationship with this woman. Therefore, it is conclusive to say that the marriage deteriorated before David's affair with that other woman, and that his infidelity was a way of ending an unhappy marriage.

> "And....that's it, in the meantime I met somebody else. I didn't' leave Jessica because of somebody else, it just, it had to be done because after 3 ½ years in the basement...you know."

Both Jessica and David placed much emphasis on how her pregnancy influenced their decision to get married. It is noteworthy to mention that neither of the two mentioned the concept of love when describing both the courtship and marriage.

> "I got pregnant and got married right after, as soon as we found out that I was pregnant......we got married."

David described this as a business decision:

> "I really think that the only reason we got together is because she got pregnant. We never actually said it, but I'm sure that's what it was...she got pregnant and she said to me 'what are we gonna do?' So we said 'let's keep her' ...it was almost like a business decision more or less you know. It's sad to say but it was like that."

As David continued speaking about his marriage, he repeatedly mentioned that they were 'incompatible as a couple' and that there was a significant lack of communication within the marriage:

> "We had very, very bad communication. I'm a person who talks a lot, she talks very little, and I'm not saying that she's right and I'm wrong or whatever. It's just that we're different, you know. I need to talk all the time, she's very secretive, that totally screwed me up, you know. I wanted to know everything, she didn't want to know anything. Not only did she not want to say anything, but she didn't want to know anything. And so you know, we were very different. The incompatibility of two people, it's something between two people, it cannot work

if....if I'm having a discussion with you and I have to entice you to talk back, well I won't be too happy about that and I'd tell you to just forget it. So that was my worst problem. She's...I mean I think she has a problem with that...to come out of her shell...but that, you know, everybody's got problems. But, in a nutshell that's it."

Catherine was a victim of infidelity twice. Her husband had two affairs while they were married, and she chose to forgive him both times, until he decided to leave her.

"Pieces kept falling out of my heart...until this last time...it was the last straw, then he finally left me."

Catherine mentioned how she forgave her husband for his first act of adultery, and was willing to do the same for the second. However, because her husband was so unhappy, he decided to break up the marriage, while Catherine mentioned in the interview that she was willing to forgive him in order to keep the marriage alive.

Throughout her second marriage, **Jessica** mentioned her husband's *possessiveness* as the cause of her break-up. She explained this possessiveness as follows:

"...when we lived together and I got to know him he was just very, very controlling. I was a prisoner in my own home, I couldn't go out, I couldn't even go to the grocery store, oh, he was like...so, so jealous....so jealous, so possessive, he was obsessed with me. He gave me the world...I had a beautiful, beautiful mansion, BMW, diamonds...I mean, you name it, I had it, but he was obsessed with me, obsessed."

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Jessica did not experience courtship with her second husband. Had she dated him, she would have learned about his possessiveness. She mentioned that she got to know her second husband while they were married as it was within the first year of their marriage that saw his true character.

Marc stated his ex-wife's '*lack of affection*' as the main reason for their separation.
"Well.....the, one of the reasons why I decided to break up the marriage is because all these years, Mary, I guess not having hot Latin blood like me, she seemed to be a little bit cold in some ways, non receptive...uh...and this kept on,

but I figured well things are gonna change, she'll see my point of view, but of course, you cannot change a person. So therefore I just accepted it."

Throughout this narrative, Marc refers to their cultural differences in order to describe his ex-wife's lack of affection. As he mentioned within his description of the courtship, he was aware of their cultural differences, however, he did not imagine that these differences would lead to the deterioration of their marriage.

In **Steve's** case, the cause for marital separation was his ex-wife's *post partum depression*. They had three children, and her depression worsened after each child was born.

> "...it just slowly progressively ate at the marriage. She wasn't happy about anything, Each time we had a child, it got worse. It was harder to make her happy..."

There were a few instances in which respondents mentioned multiple reasons for their break-up. One respondent, **Tony,** mentioned that at the beginning of their marriage, his wife had an affair with an old boyfriend. Although he aware of this, he chose to forgive her in order to keep the marriage alive. After a number of years, they both realized that they were getting bored, and therefore referred to "boredom" as the main reason for his break-up:

> "She would meet up with him for drinks, or end up in a hotel with him somewhere. I would find out little pieces, I wouldn't find out the whole story, but you know. Those were the pieces I found out through questioning her because I could always tell when she was lying, or through friends telling me things... Ya. And so actually at that point I was first thinking of divorce. (this was 2 yrs after marriage)...but it was something so...uh, you know, Italian families don't have divorce, like it's unthinkable you know....but at one point I did go see a lawyer and then all of a sudden she became pregnant... So as the years went on, problems started being more with I guess, we just started getting bored, I guess she started getting bored with me, she wanted more."

The aforementioned narrative thus portrays that the main reason for Tony's break-up was boredom. He also mentioned that her falling pregnant had a lot to do with keeping the marriage together. So there are a number of different reasons mentioned here, however, when Tony was asked to explain the main reason for his separation, he mentioned that his wife left him because she was bored. Another example which portrays the multiple reasons for divorce is **Andrew's** case as he stated that there were two reasons as to why his marriage ended:

> "she wouldn't accept me doing anything on my own. I found that very hard to deal with. She always wanted us to do things with her family, and I found that very overbearing. She comes from a family where her parents do everything together and they're happy, and so that's what she thought. I, on the contrary, come from a family where my parents are independent …she was just more traditional and had different values and I guess I'm just more modern. So those were the two things: me not wanting to be involved with her family all the time, with their traditions, I mean, they're good people, but not for me. Secondly, the fact that I wanted to have a little bit of a life outside the marriage."

Although Andrew stated two reasons for separation/divorce, the main reason was their differences in values because that was what caused her to feel as though he should not be spending time with his friends rather than spending time with her.

Both narratives reveal the complexity of each situation as there may be multiple reasons for separation and divorce. This reiterates the idea of individualized marriage as each situation portrays specific motive(s) for marital break up.

In **David's** case, the cause of separation with his second wife was her job. He was uncomfortable with the idea of her travelling overseas for work. Therefore, the main reason for the separation in this case is "wife's job", which eventually led to jealousy for David:

> "I realized that I wasn't too happy with her traveling a lot, and it was the kind of work that it was just socializing, it was not like she had to go there and do work, it

was just socializing. They had conventions and just mingle, you know, that's all, go out for dinner they had everything, and that's all it was, socializing. And after a few times I told her 'I can't do this...I could not stay home, while you go out for dinner, I don't think it's good you know and eventually it's not gonna work...' I thought I could do it, but I can't ...so I said to her 'instead of you giving up your life, I'm giving you up, so just continue your life'."

The aforementioned narratives portray the particularities of each case, as no two cases are similar. My research has thus illustrated that there are numerous motives for marital separation and divorce. The various reasons for marital break up are the direct result of the changes undergone within the marital realm. Individuals now focus on personal fulfillment and satisfaction as they refuse to live with a spouse who no longer makes them happy.

Prior to discussing the emotional consequences for each case, it is relevant to provide a brief discussion on the second hypothesis: *the better the sex, the longer the marriage.*

Sex Life and the Quality of Marriage

Sex is an important issue when analyzing the deterioration of marital quality. In theory, one would say that *the better the sex life, the better the marriage*, however, as will be further discussed throughout this section, it is evident that this is not always the case. Instead, while there were a number of respondents who described their sex lives as 'problematic', there are also a few who, in fact, did mention that they always managed to maintain a healthy sex life. This section will analyze the concept of sex in relation to the quality of marriage through the following question: *is it marital quality which determines the nature of their sex lives* or *is it sex that determines marital quality?* Considering the original hypothesis (*the better the sex life, the better the marriage*), it is implied that it is the sex life that influences the quality of a marriage, however, the contrary – that the

quality of a marriage may affect the sex life - should not be ignored. The following section will examine this hypothesis through respondents' narratives when they were asked the following question: *How would you describe your sex life throughout your marriage?*

<u>*Poor Marital Quality Leads to a Poor Sex Life*</u>

The first set of narratives portrays the effects of poor marital quality on a couple's sex life. All respondents in this section express how the turning points and conflicts within their marriages have eventually led to the deterioration of their sex lives.

> **Catherine:** "For the last 2 years of our marriage, we slept in separate rooms. I had to beg for sex because he never wanted to come near me."

> **Jessica:** "During the last few years before we separated, while he was living in the basement, we had no sex life, none."

> **Mary:** "The sex wasn't as great as it used to be, it was dying down until it completely disappeared."

The first three examples are all female non-initiators who were victims of *infidelity*. It is interesting how they each focus on the final years of their marriage in order to describe their sex lives. Here, it is obvious that their husbands were engaging in extramarital sex and as a result, did not want to have sex with their wives. These respondents mentioned how their sex lives completely deteriorated up until they had no sex life at all.

The next three narratives illustrate how the quality of their marriage directly affected their sex lives. As the beginning of this chapter stated, the main reason for **Lisa's** separation was that she *fell out of love* with her husband. Here is how she described her sex life:

"It got to a point where 'just don't come near me, don't touch me' he would go to bed at night and I would just stay up and hope that he would be sleeping when I got into bed, I just didn't feel anything for him anymore."

It seems as though she lost all feelings for him and thus no longer felt any sort of emotional or physical attraction towards him. As her feelings for him began to deteriorate, so did their sex life.

Anne's sex life began diminishing as her husband's *drug and alcohol problem* worsened. She explained how his problem influenced her feelings towards him in that she was unable to trust him, and therefore felt strong feelings of detachment.

"I find that after, over the years it did change, like I said because of the trust, I detached. So, I didn't feel that closeness anymore you know."

Finally, **Steve's** situation is similar to Lisa and Anne in that his ex-wife's *postpartum depression* slowly changed their sex life for the worse. As the years went by, the sex became less and less frequent, eventually leading to no sex at all:

"It just got worse, and worse, and worse. You know, the last 10yrs would be about 4 times a year. There was probably a year and a half that there was none."

A Poor Sex Life Leads to Poor Marital Quality

The following four narratives depict how a poor sex life can lead to the deterioration of a marriage. In this case it is interesting to list the four reasons for separation and divorce: *personality differences, lack of communication, wife's lack of affection, different religious/family values.* It is evident that these are problems which are inherent in a person's character, and therefore, were present within the initial years of their marriage. This may be one way to describe the poor quality of their sex lives, as it was never strong to begin with.

In this first case, Tanya mentioned that the main problem which caused her marital separation was their personality differences. When asked to describe her sex life, she mentioned that there was not much of a sex life to begin with and she just learned to accept it:

> **Tanya:** "We did not have much of a sex life....I mean, as a little girl I always dreamed about the romance, and the holding and love making....but I never got to experience that with my ex...so I just figured 'it's part of life'."

As she decided to ignore the fact that their sex life was almost non-existent, she later on began to realize its significant impact towards their marriage. She eventually decided that she can no longer be married to a man who is not as sexually and emotionally inclined as she was, and therefore decided to leave him.

This next narrative illustrates how a lack of communication within a marriage leads to a poor sex life, which later on results in marital separation.

> **David:** "During my first marriage, the sex was very bad....we hardly had a sex life."

Marc mentions that his ex-wife's lack of affection was a problem since the courtship. As he thought that things would change, he decided to accept it and get married, unaware of the consequences this would have towards their sex life and marital quality:

> **Marc:** Well, we always slept together in the same bed, if you call sleeping together actually sleeping. But the sex part wasn't really there to begin with, and whatever sex life we had diminished as the years went on.

Finally, this last case demonstrating how a poor sex life leads to poor marital quality is based on the couple's *different religious and family values*. As Andrew describes his sex life, it is as though they had opposing views about what sex should be like in a marriage. He describes their sex life as a physical incompatibility as she was not interested in sex as

much as he was. He continued to mention how her religious beliefs affected their sex life as well.

> **Andrew:** "We did not have as much as I wanted, I mean, she thought a lot of sex was a couple of times a week and that's not my opinion of a lot of sex. We had different views on that. Well, she tried harder to make it ...she didn't have the same drive. So it was never as much as I would have liked it, since the beginning. Eventually, the fact that it was here and there was good enough for me, but I would have liked more. So when I brought it up, she tried a little harder....but she always thought that the guy has to initiate. Like I think for a couple it should be very often. That's how I see it, there should be a lot of passion. In the morning before work, at night before bed, I thought marriage was about a lot of sex. but then there was the religion thing of her period, so for one week a month we couldn't..."

There is No Association Between Sex Life and Marital Quality

It is interesting to see that a few respondents mentioned how there were no apparent problems with their sex lives throughout their marital breakdown. This was the case for the following respondents:

> **Jessica:** "The sex was always there...very passionate. Sex and passion was not the problem with my second marriage."

> **David:** "Throughout my second marriage, the sex was very good, very passionate."

> **Tony:** "Actually I guess the sex life is the one thing that kept us together, more than we should have been. Uh I don't know I guess I have very strong sex drives and somehow we would have arguments, but then go to bed and still make out."

> **John:** "Well it never really deteriorated. It was still there...as much as it ever was."

Through these narratives, it is obvious that there is not always an association between sex life and marital quality as they each mentioned that nothing has changed over the years, regardless of their marital breakdown.

What is interesting in terms of general findings about sex and marital quality is that my sample has been more or less equally distributed among the following three categories which derived from this analysis: *marital quality affects sex life, sex life affects marital quality, and no association between marital quality and sex life.* I have decided to rename these three categories as: *Sexually frustrated, martially dissatisfied,* and *sexually satisfied but martially dissatisfied* (See *Appendix 4*) Through this, we should therefore reject the hypothesis stating that *the better the sex life, the better the marriage,* as there is no definite way of analyzing the concept of sex in relation to marital quality. Instead, when analyzing this, it is necessary to consider the three categories mentioned above.

Chapter 6

Emotional Consequences

"Pieces kept falling out of my heart."
- Catherine

This section will analyze the emotional consequences based on the level of happiness after a separation/divorce. The following analysis will be centered on the second hypothesis listed in Chapter 3: *initiators' happiness levels increase following a separation/divorce, while non-initiators' happiness levels decrease*, thus categorizing individuals into two groups: happy and sad. However, after analyzing each case, I have come to realize that the concept of the level of happiness should not be expressed in this binary form, but instead be classified as happy, sad, or ambiguous (see *Appendix 3*). The following section will portray how each individual fits into either one of these three categories.

I will analyze the happiness level after separation/divorce throughout the following groups: female initiators, female non-initiators, male initiators, and male non-initiators. A narrative from each respondent will be provided in order to elucidate the level of happiness for each case. Respondents were asked: *How would you describe your level of happiness after the separation/divorce?* Responses were as follows:

As female initiators, **Lisa** and **Jessica** portray strong feelings of happiness after their separation/divorce. When asked if their level of happiness increased, neither depicts any form of ambiguity and simply mention how their separation/divorce has made them happier people.

Lisa: "Well, happier in myself. Like, no regrets, I have no regrets, none."

Jessica: (2nd marriage): "With my second I was relieved. I was happier, yes...I felt like 'finally I could breathe, finally I could wear what I want, I could go shopping when I want...'"

As a female initiator, **Anne**'s level of happiness after her separation/divorce has been categorized as ambiguous. She mentions how she feels as though she had no choice but to end her marriage because she believed it was the right thing to do. Her husband had a drug and alcohol problem which eventually led to the deterioration of their marriage. Throughout the interview she also mentioned that she always thought of her husband as a great person as she described him as funny and romantic. However, she felt as though she had no choice but to leave him because of his drug and alcohol problem as he was no longer capable of being a husband and father:

> "In a way I did what I did because I knew that it was the right thing to do because of the fact that I could no longer love him as a husband ...I can't tell you that I'm so much happier either. I don't' know why, just like I said maybe the fact that I went through a lot..."

Through this narrative it is evident that Anne felt somewhat relieved after she left her husband, however, she did not describe herself as a happier person.

Tanya, another female initiator, expressed that she experienced strong feelings of sadness and major depression following her separation:

> "I went through a big depression, and I didn't know how my kids were doing, I didn't know how they ate, how they dressed. I lived with my parents, I went to work, I put all my energy in at work, and when I went home I used to take the car and go all the way up north...five times a week. I just did what I had to do, I had to run... I drove and drove and drove and drove. I went to Dorval to stay at the airport to watch the planes, and I'd cry and cry. It was rough, rough moments. Everything was bad... I would function fine at work, I took off in a sense that I was not there....at home, I wanted to leave the country but I couldn't... So I would cry and cry, you know, wouldn't see life at the end of the tunnel. When I came back it got bad, bad. I didn't understand why people dressed, why people

walked, breathed, I had no concept of life, I didn't want to live and I wanted to commit suicide."

Although she was the one who initiated the separation, Tanya experienced strong feelings of sadness and depression, which is different from what we've seen through the narratives of the other three female initiators. She mentioned throughout the interview that she was extremely unhappy with her husband throughout their entire marriage however, once she left him she nevertheless experienced strong feelings of unhappiness.

When referring back to my hypothesis about initiators in Chapter 3, which stated that *initiators are happier after a separation/divorce*, it is evident that the situation is not always black or white. One would infer that because it was the decision of the initiator to end the marriage, he/she would be happy once the marriage is over. However, what has been outlined through the four-female initiators is that this is not necessarily the case as two of these initiators portrayed strong feelings of sadness and ambiguity subsequent to marital separation. Once again this may be explained through the idea that all situations are different and that the motives for separation/divorce determine the level of happiness following the break up. The following section will now test this hypothesis by analyzing happiness levels for male initiators. Here are the narratives for male initiators:

> **Marc:** "My quality of life is better now…I met a nice woman who does the same type of work as I do. My life changed, I began to learn a lot about myself, I never realized how much I love taking long walks up north, with the dog, nature, parks…"

> **Steve:** "I'm more content, I'm more relaxed, but as I said where it gets hard is being alone every night in bed…uh, and you know, I don't mean …I'm not talking sexual…I just you know, having the affection or having someone close to you …that's what I find hard, talking to somebody."

> **Andrew:** "I'd hate to say it but I think I am a happier person. I do what I want, when I want…it's like, I don't know how I'm gonna be married. Like I like my life so much like that…like I get a last minute call and it's like "ok, let's go. So like ya, I'm happier, I come home after a day of stress and I don't have to worry if

I'm saying hi properly. So ya, it's work a relationship and that's not a lie, anyone is going to tell you that. It's easier to be alone. If I'm alone now, and I'm happy, then the only reason I would get married is to have kids."

David: (1st marriage):"Definitely happier. I mean, I was really sad because, I don't know if you ever broke up with somebody, but there's always that first period of mourning and adjustment, but that's just at the beginning. But it was really for the kids, I was leaving the kids behind."

2nd marriage: "As a person I cannot live with something that I'm not happy with, I mean, you know, I can do it once, but eventually it's gonna kill me, so why go there? And then I'm gonna make your life miserable. So maybe that's why I always break my relationships because it gets to a point that something shit is going to happen so let's not kill it. I don't want to waste my time."

All male initiators portray feelings of happiness after their separation/divorce. This is evident throughout each male initiator narrative as each clearly expressed their happiness without any form of ambiguity.

The second half of the hypothesis concerning happiness levels for initiators and non-initiators states that *non-initiators become unhappy after marital separation/divorce.* **Catherine**, a female initiator, mentions that her initial feeling after the separation was happiness, however, she continues to mention that she is still troubled and upset about everything. Therefore, this narrative has been categorized as ambiguous:

"I was at first a happier person, but no, I'm not at peace, but then at first, I was happier because I buried my problems, but I'm not at peace, because it's like "they got exactly what they wanted....they got away from it....financially I'm at peace, because I moved in with my mom, but I'm still bothered...I don't miss him. I'm angry..."

The remaining two female non-initiators reveal feelings of sadness and anger following their separation/divorce.

Mary: "I'm not happier, not at all. He is obviously, but I don't think I am, no. I still have to work through (begins to cry) the feelings of anger of hurt, of disappointment, I haven't forgiven him yet....I'm disappointed to think that

someone what you know and who lived with you for 30 years would turn against you and this would be the end, it was a shock and it was hurtful and I hope in time it will pass, it hasn't yet. And...I find it hard to deal with and on the everyday trials that you have, and I think the part that I find the hardest right now through this whole thing is the loneliness. I'm not saying it's the loneliness, the solitaire life, that doesn't really bother me, it's the loneliness of not having someone to talk to, to figure out things, to make the decision with and to discuss things with. Let me cry it out today so I don't have to cry it out tomorrow...and I keep reassuring myself that I will eventually be able to talk about this without getting emotional and I'm not at that stage yet."

Although Jessica later on remarried, she experienced extreme sadness once David left her.

> **Jessica**: (1st marriage): "I was very bitter, very unhappy, you know, he left, and the kids, I resented him, he left me for another woman, which made me resent him even more and eventually you just move on with your life and you forgive and forget..."

It is interesting to acknowledge how none of the **female non-initiators** show higher levels of happiness after a separation/divorce as each narrative illustrates feelings of sadness or ambiguity.

Both **male non-initiators** expressed feelings of happiness after their separation/divorce. Although one mentions that he feels as though there is a constant black cloud following him, his immediate response to the question was the he was a happier person.

> **Tony**: "Well, I would say I'm a happier person, I do have at least some times of my life where I'm happy, but I always have this black cloud following me and I do a lot of things that I enjoy and I do definitely enjoy life more, but it's almost as if there's always distractions, like this black cloud following me all the time."

> **John**: "Now, I think I'm happier...it has a lot to do with me. I was always content with the dream of marriage, and the dream of happiness, and I didn't really care who it was with almost, you know. I was willing to settle, and now, ya, I'm a happier person, a lot happier, ya. I wasn't at first though, it was the first time in my life that I've been rejected, you know. I never, you know, always made the hockey team, always was ahead of the class, first time in my life to be rejected by someone...it's very hard to deal with , but you know, eventually you get over it."

All males are happy, but it is surprising that even the non-initiators are happy –

especially considering that none of the female non-initiators were happy. It may be

plausible to conclude that the males are distorting the reality of their situation in order to

maintain their sense of masculine identity. The only male which may, in some way, be

considered ambiguous is Tony, however, his initial response is that he is, in fact, a

happier person since the separation.

Therefore, the hypothesis *"non-initiators become unhappy after marital*

separation/divorce" is reinforced through the female non-initiators, as each female

portrayed feelings of sadness after their husbands left them. However, when looking at

male non-initiator narratives, this hypothesis may be rejected as all narratives showed an

increase in happiness levels following a separation/divorce. (see *Appendix 3*) It is

interesting to note that none of the male respondents expressed feelings of sadness

subsequent to their separation/divorce. It is only the women, as both initiators and non-

initiators, who expressed feelings of ambiguity and sadness. Braver (1998) states that

"…in general, more women than men hung onto the anger they felt towards their ex-

spouses" (121). This idea is consistent within most interviews, as women expressed more

emotional reactions towards their separation or divorce in comparison to men. Levels of

happiness following separation/divorce should not be based on position as initiator/non-

initiator, but on gender.

Chapter 7

<u>Financial and Social Consequences</u>

Happiness levels for each respondent were also measured in terms of financial and social consequences. Respondents were asked to describe how they felt immediately after the separation. Each individual was asked to describe financial consequences, which were then categorized as either positive or negative. Respondents were then asked to describe the social consequences, which were then categorized into happy, sad, or ambiguous. Social consequences referred to their relationships with mutual friends, family members of the ex-spouse, dealing with new intimate relationships and relationships with children after separation. However, as I discussed these issues with respondents, the only aspect which respondents focused on was their relationships with their children. Therefore, I decided to focus solely on *relationship with children* as the social consequence. This chapter will focus on respondents' narratives pertaining to financial and social consequences after their separation/divorce in order to test the two hypotheses in Chapter 3: *Initiators' financial consequences are positive after a separation/divorce, while consequences for non-initiators are negative, therefore those who are less financially stable will not initiate a divorce and relationships with children deteriorate for the parent who did not receive full custody.*

This chapter will commence with a description of the financial consequences for each group. Out of the four female initiators, only one portrayed feelings of sadness when describing financial consequences, and that was **Lisa**. She mentioned that because she felt guilty breaking up the family, she did not want to ask for any financial aid from her husband:

"...everything was a blur, it was a very stressful time, and like I felt guilty because I was the one breaking the family up...and so, now when I look back on it, I think that after my guilt, I think even after the mediation, when we went to the lawyer, the lawyer looked at everything, he looked at me and said to my husband " you're gonna be living on filet mignon, and she's gonna be living on macaroni and cheese, this is ridiculous", you know what I mean, even the lawyer said "come on, doesn't this seem a little unfair", and that's why when I look back on it, like even, I've heard couples that get divorced where ....i could ask for certain things and they can either do it or not, I don't think it would have cost him anything to keep me on his medical or dental and I didn't even think about that or...so I think in a way, I harmed myself in that respect...I don't think he would have though, he was very bitter..."

The remaining three female initiators were happy with the financial consequences following the separation, and were therefore categorized as positive. **Jessica** (as an initiator for her second marriage) mentioned that she received a lot of help from her ex-husband. She had to move back to Montreal and so he gave her a lump sum in order for her to settle back in and buy furniture, a car, and so on. He was not obliged to pay alimony because the children were not his:

"...he helped me out when I moved back...he helped me out a lot, he made sure I wasn't out on the streets, he made sure I was ok. But you know, he gave me a substantial amount of money to, you know, buy new furniture, when I moved I sold everything, so I had to start from scratch when I came back. So he gave me enough money to buy a new car, to buy furniture, to reinstate myself."

Anne mentioned that she was perfectly stable on her own as she owns her own business and was therefore financially independent:

"Well, you know, things were not the same...it's not like two incomes are coming in...and he had a very good salary too ...but I was fortunate, I was very fortunate. So ya, I'm ok, I didn't need any financial help from anyone I was able to manage by myself. He gives me child support for my son but that's it."

Finally, **Tanya** also expressed more positive feelings about the financial consequences following the separation. She mentions that she had many problems with the notary in terms of selling the house – but, it didn't stop her from getting what she wanted. She bought the car she always wanted and a condominium which she lives in with her sons.

> "...so I bought my Honda truck that I always wanted, then it was hell and back with the house, then I bought a condo because I finally sold my house ...one thing led to another, then I finally got rid of my truck and then I finally bought the car that I always wanted...and he pays me every two weeks, it comes out of his pay..."

When analyzing female non-initiators, the financial consequences are negative. Although she wanted to leave her husband after she learned about his affair, **Catherine** was unable to do so because financial consequences would be unmanageable. When she was asked if she was thinking about leaving him when she learned about the affair, her response was as follows:

> "Yes...but I was afraid, I had three small kids, the bakery wasn't going well, I couldn't pay my mortgage... I didn't know how I was going to end up."

> "I was broke...before we got legal aid, he used to pay me for the kids, he paid what he thought was right...then every week, he used to deduct money....No mediation...went right away to legal separation, it was very quick...still waiting for divorce papers in the mail. What he was giving me wasn't enough, I couldn't pay the mortgage, had to sell the house, gave him half, invested mine...he got upset because he thought I was going to live with my mother..."

Catherine expressed negative feelings about the financial consequences of her separation. She mentions how her ex-husband has given her less than enough financial support, and because of this, she was forced to sell her house and make other decisions in order to live comfortably without relying on him. While they were married, she refused to leave her husband because she knew that she would be unable to make ends meet. This

shows how women who are less financially stable are less willing to initiate separations in unhappy marriages.

Mary, also a non-initiator, was unhappy with the financial consequences of her separation:

> "I didn't feel he was honest about opening up on his financial dealing and we left and nothing was settled. Now, in some ways, I didn't really benefit I guess. It worked out that he's given me part of the house, but people would say that it looks like a big thing, but in the end, there's a lot of work to be done and I've invested a lot of money since the marriage break up, on the house. So finally the house has been signed over to my name but there has been no alimony, no financial support, he has helped with no financial support for the house or for me for the last 2 ½ years."

This once again reinforces the hypothesis stating that *those who are less financially stable are less likely to initiate a separation*. This is evident throughout 2 cases: Mary and Catherine. Throughout her interview, Mary said that she, in fact, did take him back when he asked for her forgiveness. She was willing to forgive him for cheating on her, and told him that he can move back in the house. However, once he moved in, he realized how unhappy he was, and eventually moved out permanently. Catherine also mentioned that if her husband decided to stay, she would have forgiven him.

> "I would have still stayed with him if he wouldn't have left me…I was angry, I was scared…because of the financial consequences."

It is interesting to observe how female initiators portray more positive attitudes towards the financial consequences of their separation, while female non-initiators express sad feelings about their financial situation subsequent to their separation. It may be plausible to infer that women who initiate the separation do so because they are more financially independent than non-initiators.

The next section will analyze financial consequences for males as both initiators and non-initiators.

David: "Basically, she got 7 and I got 3...why? Because I wanted my kids to be ok. For her it was not enough, the initial response was not enough. I mean, I didn't take a lawyer, she took a lawyer and I made him take care of everything. I had nothing to hide....take whatever you need for the kids. ...But then it came to a point when the lawyer told her, "ok, that's it, you can't have anymore." And so the lawyer had to say enough is enough. The consequences are, they're terrible because you're living at a certain level and then you're crashing down basically and you try not to change, but you do. And you know I've been through this twice, and twice I had to split."

David (2nd marriage): "We didn't go through mediation either, straight to lawyers. Everything was split down the middle, she took a lawyer, I went to a lawyer...I couldn't afford...with her it was more 50/50, it's bad, every time you divorce, you go down a step."

Steve :
<u>"The Offer"</u>
"...everything was pretty much split down the middle...I made her an offer, she looked at it and said 'no, this is one-sided, this is not fair'. She actually threw the agreement back to me, and that's when we went to the mediator. And then she got 1/3 less of what I used to pay her every month in cash. I was gonna take all the debt, now she had to take ½ the dept, and she went on and on and on. So I told her 'I made an offer, you threw it at me, you said it was one-sided'. Now I'm very comfortable..."

<u>"The Car"</u>
"My car broke down and she sold her car, so both of us didn't have a car, so I went out and got one, and I offered to get her one too, and she said no. So we're going to mediation and she complains to him! Through 5 sessions, 10 minutes of every session...that I have a car and she doesn't. and he says, he looks at her and he says, "Janet, you can get a car too, if Steve can take a loan for that, you can do that too." And she says "no, I can't." what she never told them, and I didn't want to bring up was that 3-4 days a week, I would give her the car. We only had one car, and I had it, but she had the kids, and I'd give her the car, and I wouldn't have one. I never brought that up to them, that she's getting the car."

Marc: "I gave her ½ of the house and I paid 4 years of childcare. I also paid house expenses until recently, this included all maintenance, like insurance, taxes, cable, etc, up until 2005. It became a burden and it still is, it isn't over yet. We tried mediation, I was the one who suggested it because the lawyers were expensive – so we went to 6 sessions and accomplished nothing, she was

exaggerating too much and so we ended up settling for what they said in the beginning. In the end we ended up with a very large bill for the lawyers."

Andrew: "Well, nothing really, we bought this house together so if she wants it I'll give her the money for it. I mean the marriage was under a year, there's nothing to fight about, my car is under a lease, we don't have a country house, no kids, I mean between everything here it's a few thousand dollars in the house, I mean if you make the calculations, the financial consequences, there's nothing to ride home about. there's little things like jewellery and presents, which will eventually come up, but no, nothing major."

Financial consequences for male initiators varied as some described positive outcomes (Steve and Andrew) while others expressed negative feelings about their financial consequences (David and Marc). Differences in financial consequences for males will be described after a brief discussion of consequences for male non-initiators.

John: "I basically laid down what I wanted, basically she was getting the money that she put down on the house and everything else was mine, uh, she could have those, she wanted out of it so she was gonna pay for my lawyer's fees, and she did, and they weren't cheap. The only thing that I split were the divorce papers…but for everything else we went to emergency courts and she paid my lawyer, and we were there for 2 days, and I think it was about 600-800 an hour…"

Throughout his interview, John mentioned that because his wife left him, he insisted on her paying for lawyers' fees, and therefore described his financial consequences as positive. He gave her back her half of the house and nothing more. He said that since it was her decision to leave, she should be the one to pay for lawyers' fees, and she did.

Tony: "Financially it was very hard and that's why I kept going back to court, and, of course, the more time I spent in the courts the more money I spent. I had to cash in half of my RRSP's to pay for my bills and so now, I finally got the divorce and in the divorce we had 2 homes, one in the city and a cottage so the homes were supposed to be sold. Then once again she did anything to block any attempts to sell the homes."

80

Throughout the interview, Tony portrayed feelings of anger and dismay towards the legal system. Braver (1998) describes this as a 'profound bias against [men] displayed by the courts and the legal system (120).' Many men feel victimized by the decisions of legal authorities with regards to issues such as child custody and alimony. Although individuals within governmental institutions are male, they strongly favour women, and this idea may be referred to as "government of men by men and for women". Tony expressed feelings of victimization when he described the financial consequences of his separation:

> "You'd have to blame society and the legal system – women have all the rights, it sets the tone that when a couple sets into divorce you have to put your boxing gloves on."

This narrative depicts the negative outlook Tony has towards the financial consequences of his divorce. He feels as though both society and legal system automatically favour women, and as a result men become victims.

This is also a reoccurring theme throughout the notion of child custody, and how it is women who win custody battles in the majority of the cases. This also leads to fathers being victims of Parental Alienation Syndrome and how they soon become alienated from their children. Parental Alienation Syndrome, also referred to as P.A.S., will be further discussed throughout the upcoming sections of this chapter.

Men, as both initiators and non-initiators mention that their ex-wives were asking for unrealistic sums of money for alimony and child support. Each male narrative portrays this negative point of view towards the legal system, as they feel it is constantly in favour of women. There is an exception for males who were married for one year or less as they both portray positive financial consequences after the separation/divorce –

one being and initiator, the other a non-initiator. Their marriages were short-term and therefore did not have substantial financil assets to divide among themselves and their ex-wives. All other males – initiators and non-initiators express that financial arrangements with their wives were problematic, regardless of their position as initiator or non-initiator. Therefore, I have concluded that as long as a couple possesses substantial financial assets, they will be faced with difficulty in financial settlements. This is evident for all male respondents, with one exception: Steve. In Steve's situation, he was strongly concerned about the well being of his children, as was the case for David. However, because Steve's ex-wife refused to settle on his offer, she instead turned to mediators and lawyers and consequently received less than what was initially offered, which therefore led to positive financial consequences for Steve.

All female initiators described their financial consequences as positive, except for Lisa. She described her financial situation following her separation as negative as she felt guilty breaking up the family and therefore did not want to ask for financial aid from her ex-husband. This therefore rejects the part of the hypothesis which states that *those who are less financially stable will not initiate a divorce*. All three female non-initiators described their financial consequences as negative, which therefore reinforces the hypothesis that *financial consequences for non-initiators are negative and that those who are less financially stable are less likely to initiate a separation/divorce*. As for the males, 3 of the 5 initiators described their financial consequences as negative, which therefore rejects the hypothesis that *financial consequences for initiators are positive*. The remaining 2 males supported the hypothesis and described their financial consequences as positive. Finally, for the 2 male non-initiators, we see that one supports the hypothesis,

while the other does not as he explained that he did not encounter any difficulty in making financial settlements with his ex-wife. Evidently, the hypothesis should not be entirely ignored as my data shows some support, however, results illustrate some variation for all four groups.

The next variable used to measure happiness levels was the respondents' relationships with children after separation/divorce. As mentioned in the beginning of this section, participants did not reveal enough information about other social aspects (i.e. mutual friends, family members, etc) therefore "relationships with children" is the only social factor which will be used to measure happiness levels. The following section will thus analyze how each respondent dealt with familial changes and whether or not this affected their relationships with their children. (*Respondents who did not have children will not be included within the analysis.*)

This analysis will commence with a discussion about the social consequences for female respondents. **Lisa, Jessica** (both divorces), and **Anne** all portray positive attitudes towards the social outcomes of their separations/divorces. Lisa mentioned that they had joint custody of the children, one week they were with her, the other with her ex-husband. However, as the children got older, they chose who they wanted to live with. Her older daughter was married, her second daughter chose to stay with her, and her son chose his dad. Although her son decided to live with his father, she mentions that they have still managed to maintain a strong relationship:

> **Lisa:** "But I think, all in all, with the kids, everything went well, more than expected."

Throughout both divorces, **Jessica** mentioned that she managed to maintain a strong relationship with her children. The focus was centered on the consequences from her first marriage, as David was the biological father of their children. Therefore, the following narrative has been obtained from the first part of the interview, focussing on Jessica's first divorce.

> "…we always had a good relationship with our kids. We never used our kids against each other. He used to always say that they had the best mother in the world, and I always used to say that they had the best father in the world. So we never would…you know, we just uh … we both had one thing in common, we both adored our children, and we'll always have that in common, and that's why we will always have that bond. I'm the one that always pushes the kids to go see their grandparents, his parents. I mean I always tell them to go see them as much as they want, you know. It's never easy…never easy."

Although **Anne** left her ex-husband due to his drug and alcohol problem, she nevertheless encouraged her son to interact with his father.

> "Between my ex and my son there never really was much of a relationship, like he's supposed to take him twice a week, like every weekend, but that never happens. My son at some point chose not to go…(he's 15) but even him, I noticed he doesn't make the effort at all, I think he sees how his son got detached so he doesn't feel the need to try. I always tell him how he has to make the effort because he's the parent. I always tell him that he never has to give up, he's his father for life. But he feels rejected by his son….he doesn't really, but at some point now my son made up with him a little, like they talk to each other a little more, but even though they talk, they don't have much of a rapport …I wanted to meet up with him now and tell him "listen you gotta make more of an effort now, hang in there, he needs you cuz you're his father, even though you made all the mistakes in the world, you can make it up…before it's too late. but if you keep standing in the shadow, the moment you're going disconnect how are you ever going to get back?" I mean, he's his father, and even though he is what he is, he's still his father, now good, bad, whatever, you can't change it, that's what it is. At least I tried….i made the effort, even though he never listened, at least I tried, if I wouldn't have tried I would have never known."

Both **Tanya** and **Catherine** explained that they experienced negative outcomes in terms of their relationship with their children subsequent to their separation/divorce. In spite of

gaining full custody of their children, the sadness they felt after their separation/divorce overpowered the happiness they should have been experiencing with their children. Although both Tanya and Catherine gained full custody of their children but remained sad after the separation/divorce, their situations are completely different. Experiencing severe depression after her separation, Tanya mentioned that she did not want to have anything to do with her children. She mentioned that she "had no idea what they ate, what they wore, whether or not they had homework, if they took their bath before going to bed…" This was the immediate outcome of her separation. However, as she slowly recovered from her depression, Tanya mentioned that she has a beautiful relationship with both her sons:

> "…they're both stuck to me like glue, we're together all the time…we're very, very close."

With regards to **Catherine's** situation, she expresses negative views about her relationship with her children. Throughout the interview, she explained how, although her husband left her, she still feels as though she broke up the family and therefore feels as though her children lost respect for her:

> "…dealing with the kids' emotions was very hard. Although I got closer with children and they cling to me more…I still feel like I lost a bit of respect, I feel like I owe them my life…and it's the wrong way of thinking, I get stepped on…I feel like I'm being pulled."

Mary's level of happiness in relation to her relationship with her children after her separation has been categorized as *ambiguous*. She explained how the separation brought them closer, but then again also focussed on the difficulties she experienced in providing for her two sons, both financially and emotionally. She had to deal with her sons'

problems on her own without the help of her ex-husband. When asked to describe her situation with her children, she mentioned the following:

> "Well, I wouldn't say our relationship really changed, maybe closer, they were more, I depended on them more because they were older, I depended on them to do things around the house… And 'til this day …if a crisis happens, if any of them are sick, he still after 2-3 days, has to phone them to find out how they're doing…but in an immediate crisis he's nowhere to be found. He doesn't want to deal with it… And….it's a problem, you know, it's all about the happy times. So I took over dealing with a lot of everyday problems, it was difficult, it was hard."

This narrative portrays ambiguity as she mentions that she became closer with both her children, however, she had to take on much more responsibility once her husband left her, and this made her somewhat unhappy.

As for the male respondents, there have been two cases (Steve and Tony) of *Parental Alienation Syndrome* (P.A.S.), which will be further discussed in this chapter. First, the following section will briefly delineate the consequences for the remaining male respondents - David and Marc, who are both initiators.

David had children with both wives. When describing his relationship with his children after both divorces, he mentioned that the divorce brought them closer together. He did not gain full custody of his children in either of the two cases of divorce. Here is how he described his relationship with his children:

> "I have a beautiful relationship with all my kids. I mean that….I divorced my wives, but my kids are my kids and they're the closest thing I have and I'll do everything for them. And I'm in their life, and I am, I am probably more present in their lives now than if I would be living with them, maybe, I don't know. But staying for the kids…it's not the right thing to do. You can be a good parent even if you're not there."

Marc also portrayed positive outcomes with his children after the separation. He mentioned that there were no problems as he sees his children on a regular basis:

86

"We have a very good relationship, we see each other regularly, my younger son spends time with me often, on occasions we see each other...my older son, however, is still a little bothered about the whole thing, but it doesn't stop us from seeing each other."

This section has thus rejected the hypothesis in chapter 3, which states that *relationships with children deteriorate for the parent who did not receive full custody*, as this was not the case for *all* respondents who did not receive full custody of the children. As all 6 females received full custody of their children, 3 of these women portrayed feelings of sadness and ambiguity about their relationship with their children after their separation or divorce. As for the 4 males included in this analysis (2 male respondents did not have children), none of them received full custody of the children. 2 of these males portrayed feelings of happiness in terms of their relationship with their children. David was divorced twice, had children with both wives, and did not receive full custody in either situation and still mentioned that he maintained strong ties with his children. So 3 out of the 5 cases portray males who, regardless of not receiving full custody of the children, are pleased with the rapport they have with their children. The remaining 2 cases show males as unhappy with their relationship with their children and both are victims of Parental Alienation Syndrome.

The following section will focus on *Parental Alienation Syndrome* .There was no occurrence of P.A.S. for any of the female respondents, as it was only evident for 2 of the male respondents. They each explained the negative outcomes of their separations/divorces with regards to their children, and how they had to struggle in order to maintain a relationship with them. As they expressed their relationship with their children throughout their separation, and later on after their divorce, it is evident that their

attempt in sustaining close ties with their children became problematic. Prior to discussing the narratives of the victims of Parental Alienation Syndrome, it is pertinent to provide a brief explanation of the important aspects of P.A.S.

Parental Alienation Syndrome, often referred to as P.A.S., is a consequence of divorce and occurs when the custodial parent alienates the child from the other parent and has many negative effects towards children and their relationship with the 'alienated' parent. The custodial parent has a significant impact in terms of the thoughts and feelings of the child towards the other parent, and this is what leads to the 'alienation' of the non-custodial parent. Coined by Richard Gardner, P.A.S. is explained through eight concepts (2003: 3). He mentions the various characteristics of P.A.S. and its effects towards children. His first point mentions how the child begins to *withdraw* from the non-custodial parent. Through this, the child expresses extremely strong feelings of hatred towards the 'alienated' parent and maintains a strong sense of security with the custodial parent. Another significant aspect of P.A.S. is how the child tends to develop *illogical reasons* for not wanting to ever associate with the 'other' parent. The child may use ridiculous excuses for not wanting to ever see the other parent again: "Mom laughs too loud!" or "Dad makes too much noise when he eats!" This leads to the *lack of ambivalence*, in which the child develops significantly strong feelings of hatred towards the 'alienated' parent, and strong feelings of love towards the parent they live with. It is the custodial parent who *socializes* the child into hating the other parent and not the child who decides to reject the other parent. If the child makes a negative comment about the other parent, the custodial-parent then takes it upon himself/herself to disallow the child to communicate with him/her. Consequently, the custodial parent is considered the 'nice'

one because it seems as though he/she is keeping their child away from the other parent who is considered unpleasant. It is no surprise that the child has *automatic support* for the custodial parent. In the child's eyes, the custodial parent is the preferred parent and there is nothing he/she can do which can alter his/her perception of the parent they live with. According to the child, anything and everything that the custodial parent does is considered appropriate. Another result from P.A.S. is the idea that the child feels as though the 'other' parent is *not worthy* to see him/her. The child therefore does not accept any gifts or compliments from the alienated parent and does not adopt any feelings of guilt for him/her. There is also the *presence of borrowed scenarios*, which refers to the idea that these children adopt various expressions and terminologies which are not their own. For example, "Daddy's new girlfriend is a whore!" or "Mom's friends are all bitches!" these words are obviously not coming from a six year old and were obviously imitated from an adult. The last aspect of the 'Parental Alienation Syndrome' is the idea that the *family* of the custodial parent develops strong feelings of hatred for the alienated parent as well.

The following narratives will illustrate 2 cases of Parental Alienation Syndrome, as both respondents provided a detailed explanation of the consequences of their separation and the effects towards their relationship with their children.

> **Steve:** "My youngest daughter and I are really starting to have a better relationship...and my wife, my ex wife is playing a little head games with her...and in some way...maybe she realizes, or not...but she's trying to put a wedge in between us. And the past two weeks have been really difficult for my daughter cuz she feels like she's being put in the middle, and I do whatever I can to keep her out of it... and Janet just doesn't get it. My relationships with my children changed...and that's due to Janet, she has negative conversations with the kids...and one night my youngest daughter stuck up for me, and it's caused a real ...you know, her mother puts her on the spot, or she'll get on the phone and

start calling me names…with the kids in the background and I just, you know, we can't talk. You know, this isn't appropriate, we can't talk, so I just email her. And she doesn't like that, she wants to be able to communicate like adults, but the kids are in the background and she's saying "you're a liar, you're this, you're that"…it's not been good for anybody… My youngest daughter, she comes over to me, she's talking and she says "mommy and her friend were talking about you, and it was really negative, and mom got mad at me cuz I wouldn't join in the conversation" and I said "well, good for you…you have every right to join in and make your voice." And she said "when I didn't join in, mom was like 'why aren't you joining in?' why are you defending dad?' and my daughter says "no I'm not, I'm just not joining in."

Tony: "My children were I guess had the kind of same temperament as me, quiet and not outspoken and keep to themselves. So when this all happened they kind of kept everything in, they wouldn't say anything, they wouldn't express feelings, they would just do what they were told. So basically, what happens is you know, like they say 'the squeaky wheel gets the grease' and their mom had the big mouth and kept barking at them and giving them orders, and so they always did what she told them to do. So this is how it started and so at the beginning, my focus was to get joint custody, that took about 2 years. The teenagers should have reacted more and expressed what they wanted, but instead they were just silent and brainwashed by their mother. During the first 2yrs she decided when I was gonna see the kids, basically it was court order, so I had custody from Thursday to Sunday every second week, so it was like extended custody."

It is interesting how P.A.S. occurred among male respondents. Throughout Braver's work entitled *"Divorced Dad's: Shattering the Myths"*, he mentions how many women attempt to eliminate visitation from their ex-husbands by finding different excuses for the child. Another aspect of P.A.S. is that women sometimes program their children into not wanting to have any contact with their father (1998: 50). This was evident throughout both narratives, as Steve mentioned that his ex-wife would say negative things about him in front of the children. In Tony's situation, he mentioned that his ex-wife "brainwashed" the children into not wanting to see him.

Chapter 8

Divorces and Divorces and Divorces: All Divorces are Different.

I argued the idea of marriage being based on personal choice and fulfillment by delineating the differences in courtship and the development of the marriage, turning points and conflicts, and the consequences of separation and/divorce in terms of the level of happiness of the respondent and the social and financial consequences.

In the beginning of my research, I hypothesized that *the longer the courtship, the longer the marriage*. After completing my interviews, what I found was that it is not so much the length of the courtship, but its nature, which determines the length and nature of a marriage. *Appendix 2* illustrates the inconsistencies between the duration of the courtship and number of years married. Thus, with one couple, the courtship lasted 3 years, and the married only 8 months. With another, the courtship was one year, and the marriage lasted 17 years. Others had courtships between 4 and 5 years and their marriages lasted 20 to 21 years, while another respondent whose courtship lasted 4 years was married for 7 years.

The nature of the courtship refers to the fact that some couples experienced difficulties during the courtship before they got married, while others mentioned that the courtship was unproblematic and that problems arose later on during the marriage. The majority of respondents described their courtship as unproblematic. The remaining respondents said that there were inherent problems in their relationship before they got married, but they decided to accept them and get married regardless of these problems. One male mentioned that his courtship lasted 6 years and was extremely problematic. They got married regardless of their problems, and were divorced after one year. Another

male mentioned that the courtship lasted longer than the marriage: they dated for 3 years, and the major problem throughout the courtship was their religious differences. He mentioned that he was willing to accept these differences and get married. They dated for 3 years, and their marriage lasted 8 months. It is interesting to see how the courtships in both cases last longer than the marriages.

Comparing the short courtships (from 0-2 years) and the long courtships (3 + years), with the duration of the marriage, the data indicates that the average duration of the former was 17.2 years, while the average duration of the latter was 13.2 years (see *Appendix 2)*. Therefore, the longer the courtship, the shorter the marriage. This is counter-intuitive and suggests that the conventional wisdom about "not being in too much of a hurry to get married" is not correct. It is the quality of the courtship that counts, not the quantity.

When analyzing the turning points and conflicts for each of the 14 cases (there are 14 cases because 2 of the 12 respondents were divorced twice), it is interesting that none of the motives for separation or divorce are repeated, except for infidelity, which appears 4 times. The remaining reasons mentioned were: falling out of love, possessiveness, drug and alcohol abuse, personality differences, incompatibility, work, postpartum depression, spouse's lack of affection, different values (religion, family), and boredom. (See Appendix 3) The reasons for marital separation therefore vary widely. The most common was infidelity of the other party: three men and one woman; one of the men had two affairs. That was one third of the sample. One of the women whose husband had an affair refused to leave him for financial reasons; it was he who initiated the divorce.

Interpretation of some of this data is sticky. One couple were living apart: separate areas in the same house. She says he was unfaithful and then left her. He says he left and then met another woman. This brings up the issues of truth and knowledge, but also the issue of when the marriage was over: when he moves into the basement or when he moves out?

Respondents were asked to describe their sex lives in order to measure marital quality. The hypothesis made was that *the better the sex life, the better the marriage.* The quality of respondents' sex lives was not necessarily a predictor of separation and/or divorce. Instead, the findings for this section may be summarized into three main points: Marital quality affects the quality of the couple's sex life, the couple's sex life may affect their marital quality, and there is no association between marital quality and the couple's sex life. Respondents were placed in either of these categories which shows how there is no clear association between sex life and marital quality (see *Appendix 4*)

For 6 of the respondents – 5 of the 6 women, the quality of their sex lives deteriorated, and so did their marital satisfaction. For 3 of these women, the main reason their sex lives fell apart was that their husband was having an affair. For 4 of the respondents, their marital dissatisfaction (for various reasons) led to their diminished sexual satisfaction. Finally, the third category, including 3 of the 6 men, remained sexually satisfied even though their marriages were falling apart. Only one male complained that his sexual dissatisfaction affected the quality of the marriage.

The two conclusions then are first, that the relation between sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction is complicated and plural. Second, according to my data, women are more likely to report that sexual dissatisfaction leads to marital dissatisfaction;

Whereas men are more likely to report either that marital dissatisfaction leads to sexual dissatisfaction (3 out of 7) or that sexual satisfaction remained high despite marital dissatisfaction (3 out of 7) – precisely the opposite of the majority of women. 5 of the 7 female cases reported sexual dissatisfaction as a cause of marital dissatisfaction. It is interesting that out of the 7 male respondents only one admitted that his poor sex life was a factor in determining poor marital quality.

These opposed conclusions lend substance to John Gray's Mars-Venus argument; but the sample needs to be larger before we can reach firm conclusions. This data is indicative rather than conclusive.

The emotional, financial, and social consequences of separation and divorce were also analyzed. The emotional consequences were measured in terms of how respondents expressed their level of happiness after their separation/divorce. My hypothesis was that *initiators' levels of happiness increase after a separation/divorce, while non-initiators levels of happiness decrease.* What is interesting here is how there was a mixture of feelings for all women – both initiators and non-initiators, while *all* men expressed feelings of happiness after their separation/divorce. Two females, who were both initiators, mentioned that they remained happy after their break-up. The remaining females – initiators and non-initiators - expressed feelings of sadness or ambiguity. The situation for male respondents begs the question of why all males said that they were happier after their separation or divorce. One explanation may be men's emotional detachment, and how men are said not to be in touch with their emotions as much as women are. Another possibility is the notion of male stoicism and the idea that men are not supposed to show emotions. In order to maintain their 'masculine identities', perhaps

men sometimes feel as though they should not express their emotions. Evidently, the men have responded in far more positive terms to separation and divorce than the majority of the women – regardless of whether they initiated the separation/divorce or not.

Findings for financial consequences were as follows: individuals were categorized as "positive" or "negative". What is interesting here is how all female non-initiators were categorized as negative. One female initiator also described her financial consequences as negative. She mentioned that she felt guilty about leaving her husband and so she did not ask him for any financial aid. The remaining female initiators described their financial situation after their separation/divorce as positive. It is evident that women who are more financially stable are more likely to initiate a separation, while women who are not will remain in an unhappy marriage in order to avoid financial problems. With regards to the 7 cases of male respondents, 4 considered their financial consequences to be negative, while the remaining 3 were positive. 2 of the 3 positive cases were those who were married for one year or less, and did not have substantial financial assets and therefore settled everything quickly.

The deciding factor in the positive or negative financial consequences is not gender, but initiator /non-initiator status. Of the 9 initiators, 5 reported positive economic consequences: i.e. their financial status actually improved. Of the 5 non-initiators 4 reported worse economic circumstances. It is counter-intuitive, again, that 6 of the 12 respondents report that their financial circumstances improved, but one woman was given a lump sum by her husband, another woman had her own company, a few had no assets

but split what they had, one man made a generous offer to his wife, which she refused to accept, and therefore mediation allowed him to give her less than his initial offer.

Prior to commencing my research, I listed numerous concepts which I wanted to categorize under social consequences, such as the effects of the separation/divorce on children, communication with mutual friends after the separation/divorce, communication with ex-spouse's family, effects of separation/divorce on new intimate relationships, and so on. However, once the interviews were completed, I noticed that the only aspect which was elaborated on was that of the children, more specifically, the respondents' relationship with their children after the break-up. Therefore, findings for the social consequences are based solely on respondents' relationships with children.

Out of the 14 cases, 2 were not included when discussing social consequences (relationship with children after separation/divorce) because they did not have any children. 7 of the 12 respondents expressed happiness about the relationships with their children following their separation/divorce. 3 of these respondents are male initiators, and 4 are female – 3 initiators and 1 non-initiator. The 5 remaining respondents showed feelings of sadness or ambiguity when asked to describe their relationship with their children. 3 out of the 5 are women: one mentioned that she experienced a major depression after her separation and did not want to know anything about their children. She mentioned that she "...had no idea what they ate, what they wore to school, whether or not they had homework, or if they were bathed before bed." Another woman mentioned that she felt guilty about the separation and that she will have to make it up to her children for the rest of her life. The woman who was categorized as 'ambiguous', expressed that she did feel a stronger connection with her children after her separation,

however, she found it rather difficult to deal with their problems on her own. She felt overwhelmed with responsibility once her husband left. The remaining 2 male respondents who portrayed feelings of sadness when describing their social consequences were both victims of *Parental Alienation Syndrome.* Their ex-wives were making sure that they would not be able to spend time with their children, they were saying negative things about them to the children, and so on.

All of the women in this sample received full custody of their children however, this does not necessarily allow us to conclude that they remain happy with their relationships with them. The opposite can be said about men in that none of them received full custody, however, this does not mean that all men remain sad about their relationships with their children. Therefore, there are no clear conclusions about the respondents' position as initiator/non-initiator, or gender, in relation to their relationships with their children after a separation or divorce.

In conclusion, I have tried to indicate the different voices of separation and divorce, and the complexity of the situations. I have specifically analyzed the relevance of initiation, courtship, sex, emotions, finances and children; and while no clear patterns emerge, none the less, both gender and initiator/non-initiator status do have an impact for some. What is more striking is the difference in the voices.

Appendix 1

Division of Initiators and Non-Initiators by Gender

Female Initiators:	**Male Initiators:**
Lisa	David x 2
Jessica	Steve
Anne	Marc
Tanya	Andrew

Female Non-Initiators:	**Male Non-Initiators:**
Jessica	Tony
Catherine	John
Mary	

Appendix 2

Duration of Courtship and Marriage

	SHORT COURTSHIPS (0-2 YEARS)	*MARRIAGE*
Lisa	1	17
Jessica	2	11
Mary	2	30
Jessica	0	4
Marc	2	30
David	2	11
TOTAL		103
AVERAGE		17.2

	LONG COURTSHIPS (3+ YEARS)	*MARRIAGE*
Anne	7	15
Tanya	3	20
Catherine	4	21
Steve	4 ½	21
Andrew	3	8 months
David	4	7
Tony	5	20
John	6	1
TOTAL		105.7
AVERAGE		13.2

Appendix 3

Reasons for Separation and Divorce

Lisa	**Fell out of love**
Jessica	**Infidelity**
Jessica	**Husband's Possessiveness**
Anne	**Drug and Alcohol Abuse**
Tanya	**Personality Differences**
Catherine	**Infidelity**
Mary	**Infidelity**
David	**Incompatibility**
David	**Wife's Job**
Steve	**Postpartum depression**
Marc	**Wife's lack of affection**
Andrew	**Different Religious and Family Values /Wife's Possessiveness**
Tony	**Boredom**
John	**Infidelity**

Sex Life and Marital Quality

CATEGORY 1
Sexually Frustrated

Catherine

Jessica

Mary

Lisa

Anne

Steve

CATEGORY 2
Maritally Dissatisfied

Tanya

David

Marc

Andrew

CATEGORY 3
Sexually Satisfied but Maritally Dissatisfied

Jessica

David

Tony

John

Appendix 5

Happiness Level Following Separation/Divorce

Female Initiators	**Lisa**	**Jessica**	**Anne**	**Tanya**
	Happy	Happy	Ambiguous	Sad

Female Non-Initiators	**Catherine**	**Mary**	**Jessica**	
	Ambiguous	Sad	Sad	

Male Initiators	**David**	**Steve**	**Marc**	**Andrew**
	Happy Happy	Happy	Happy	Happy

Male Non-Initiators	**Tony**	**John**		
	Happy	Happy		

Appendix 6

Financial and Social Consequences
Following Separation/Divorce

Female Initiators	Lisa	Jessica	Anne	Tanya
Financial	Negative	Positive	Positive	Positive
Relationship with Children	Happy	Happy	Happy	Sad

Female Non-Initiators	Catherine	Mary	Jessica
Financial	Negative	Negative	Negative
Relationship with Children	Sad	Ambiguous	Happy

Male Initiators	David (x2)	Steve	Marc	Andrew
Financial	Negative Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive
Relationship with Children	Happy Happy	Sad	Happy	n/a

Male Non-Initiators	Tony	John
Financial	Negative	Positive
Relationship with Children	Sad	n/a

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