

CONSTRUCTING MARRIAGE:
A THEMATIC ANALYSIS
OF SELF-HELP BOOKS ON MARRIAGE

by

Stephanie M. Jones

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Communication
Boise State University

December 2009

© 2009

Stephanie M. Jones

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE COLLEGE

DEFENSE COMMITTEE AND FINAL READING APPROVALS

of the thesis submitted by

Stephanie Mae Jones

Thesis Title: Constructing Marriage: A Thematic Analysis of Self-Help Books
on Marriage

Date of Final Oral Examination: 12 November 2009

The following individuals read and discussed the thesis submitted by student Stephanie Mae Jones, and they evaluated her presentation and response to questions during the final oral examination. They found that the student passed the final oral examination.

Laurel Traynowicz, Ph.D. Chair, Supervisory Committee

Peter Wollheim, Ph.D. Member, Supervisory Committee

Rick Moore, Ph.D. Member, Supervisory Committee

The final reading approval of the thesis was granted by Laurel Traynowicz, Ph.D., Chair of the Supervisory Committee. The thesis was approved for the Graduate College by John R. Pelton, Ph.D., Dean of the Graduate College.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband who cooked, cleaned, and wiped my tears when I thought I was going into a meltdown.

My mother for helping out with nanny duties.

My sister Michelle for being patient with my short attention span

My niece Cooper for giving me pure joy when my brain was tired.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis would not have been completed without the help and support of many people. I wish I could thank everybody who has helped or contributed, but there simply would not be enough room. I would like to thank the following:

First and foremost I would like to thank Dr. Laurel Traynowicz, who pulled me out of the fire when I thought all was hopeless. I can never truly express my gratitude for her dedication in guiding me through this process. Her positive words kept me going when I thought all was lost. It is due to her kindness, patience, and determination that this thesis was completed.

To Dr. Moore for asking me tough questions and making me see beyond the obvious. His suggestions were always valuable and enlightening. Dr. Wollheim for your comments that constantly kept me on my toes and helped me to become a better writer. I will be eternally grateful that both gentlemen agreed to be on my committee.

To my friends in the graduate program, each one of you had unique qualities that helped me excel as a scholar and person. I will always remember and value the extraordinary think tank we had.

To my husband Clive Jones for supporting me in trying to go farther than I ever thought I could. Your belief in me kept me going many, many, frustrating nights.

To my family I could not possibly have made it through without your assistance this last six months of the process. My mother Dena Brooks for prodding me to finish, my sister Michelle Feldtman for being patient with my memory lapses, and my dad Joe Brooks for being an easygoing guy who was always relaxing to be around.

These thanks barely scrape the barrel for everybody that helped with the development of this thesis and assisted me in making sure I stayed grounded while working on it. I will be eternally grateful to each and every one of you.

ABSTRACT

Questions about what makes a marriage work are treated widely in the popular press. This study seeks to discover how we learn about marriage through self-help books. According to Cameron (2007), these texts can become a part of our construction of everyday life. Therefore this study focuses on how marital self-help books frame the institution, and whether relational dialectics were present in each book. Two books—Laura Schlessinger’s *The Proper Care and Feeding of Marriage* and John Gottman’s *Seven Principles of Making Marriage Work*—were selected through an exhaustive process. A thematic analysis was conducted on each text, and topics were compared and contrasted to discover if there was a unified theme. Results showed different paradigms operating in both texts, which made it difficult to determine one central theme. Relational dialectics were not acknowledged meaningfully in either book. Counselors and consumers can use this research to open dialogue about what messages are the most helpful in constructing a marriage.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vi
ABSTRACT	vii
CHAPTER ONE: MAKING MARRIAGE WORK.....	1
Introduction.....	1
History of Self-Help Literature.....	3
Professional Counseling of Self-Help Literature.....	10
Theoretical Perspectives	11
Social Constructionism.....	12
Relational Dialectics	12
CHAPTER TWO: METHODS.....	18
Overview.....	18
Texts	18
Developing Themes	21
Determining Relational Dialectics within Chapters	22
CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS	23
Themes from <i>The Proper Care and Feeding of Marriage</i>	23
Feminism Is Destructive to Marriage	23
Feminism Has Taught Women to Disdain Men	25
Feminism Denies Women Their True Nature.....	27

Contrary to Feminism, Real Women Put Their Family First.....	29
Men and Women have Different Traits	31
Accepting the Masculine and Feminine Traits Ensures a Happy Marriage.....	33
Women Need to Support Their Husbands	34
Family of Origin	36
A Marriage is about Each Other	40
Themes from <i>The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work</i>	45
Friendship Is the Most Important Aspect of Marriage.....	45
Conflict Happens	48
Repair Attempt.....	49
Accept the One You Love.....	50
Knowing Your Spouse Equals a Happy Marriage.....	52
Love Map.....	52
Dreams and Goals.....	53
Developing Family Culture.....	54
We-ness.....	54
Relational Culture	56
The Presence of Relational Dialectics	57
<i>The Proper Care and Feeding of Marriage</i>	57
<i>The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work</i>	59
CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION.....	63
Themes.....	63
Relational Dialectics	68

Limitations	70
Implications for Future Research.....	71
REFERENCES	72

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Themes from <i>The Proper Care and Feeding of Marriage</i>	23
Table 2	Themes from <i>The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work</i>	44
Table 3	Combined Themes	63

CHAPTER ONE: MAKING MARRIAGE WORK

Introduction

Individual conceptions of marriage vary from person to person and culture to culture. Influenced by family, cultural norms and personal experience, individuals construct an ideal image of what a marriage is and is not. However, conceptualizing how marriage will function and what role each person will take is far from predictable. A dynamic process between one individual and another, a marriage is always in flux over time. Thus, while many couples enter a marriage with present notions of what it “should be,” they often find what a marriage actually *is* goes beyond what they assumed. Over time, these perceptions may change and can either create a stronger marriage or lead to trouble.

Marriage as a social form is ingrained in the fabric of American culture. Over 147,000,000 responses appear when the word marriage is put into a Google search. In November, 2008 California passed proposition 8, making it illegal for homosexuals to marry. People took to the streets to protest the passing of the law and celebrities such as Kathy Griffin used their television shows to advocate for gays to have the right to marry. The infidelity of Governor Sanford and Senator John Edwards prompted *Time* to run its July issue with a picture of a wedding cake with the figures of a bride and a groom on top of the cake, sinking. The caption read: “Unfaithfully Yours: Infidelity is ruining our most

sacred institution. How to make marriage matter again.” Flanagan (2009) describes marriage as “the one reliable shelter in an uncaring world—or it can be a matchless tool for the infliction of suffering on the people you supposedly love above all others . . .” (p. 47). If we look at the enormous wedding industry that consists of bridal magazines, websites, vendors, and other businesses, clearly marriage that is an important American institution.

Although family, cultural norms, and personal experience shape expectations of marriage, people look beyond the family unit to shape their ideas and concepts. One of many tools, self-help books, can assist in this pursuit (Simmonds, 1992). For the purpose of this study, self-help books are defined as books that “help an individual improve, modify, or otherwise understand his or her personal characteristics” (Katz & Katz, 1985 p. xv). Such books range from *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (Carnegie, 1994) to *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* (Gray, 1992) to *Women Who Worry Too Much: How to Stop Worry and Anxiety from Ruining Relationships, Work & Fun* (Hazlett-Stevens, 2005). Readers turn to self-help books as a means of attaining, achieving, or improving mental health (Simmons, 1982). According to Cameron (2007), the advice self-help books advocate can become a part of our “mental wallpaper” (p. 392).

It may be easy to dismiss the effect of self-help literature, but self-help books do have an impact on our culture. Like other forms of mass media, self-help books can “reflect and sustain cultural beliefs and values” (Zimmerman, Holm, & Haddock, 2001, p. 122). These books produce a multi-million dollar business annually (Rosen, Glasgow, & Moore, 2003). In American culture this is evidenced by the prevalence of self-help

books on bestseller lists. In particular, *The New York Times* Bestseller List has special categories for self-help books located under “Hard Cover Advice” and “Paperback Advice.” Furthermore, booksellers such as Amazon.com, Borders, and Barnes & Noble break down their bestseller lists to include self-help or advice books. Not only are self-help books sold in large quantities, but magazines print their concepts, which are also discussed on television and radio talk shows such as “Oprah.”

Although studies have been conducted on relationship self-help books that involve romantic relationships between men and women, the research generally focuses on gender issues (Simmonds, 1992; Zimmerman et al., 2001). These studies are not focused on marriage specifically, but on men and women relating in a general romantic manner. Research in this area does not distinguish between dating, cohabiting and marriage. Each of these is a different form of a relationship and although they may have some features in common, each can also require different skills to create a satisfactory relationship (Brown & Booth, 1996). Marriage is explicitly different from any other form of relationship between two people. This study will fill the gap in the research by examining self-help books on marriage.

History of Self-Help Literature

Self-help books are a relevant part of our American culture. By examining the historical context we can get a snapshot of the current thoughts and wisdom on any attempt to improve the self. They have been a part of life since the landing at Plymouth Rock and are still present at the current time.

Research that examines the origins of self-help books primarily looks at what was produced by the Puritans. Books such as Bishop Bayly’s *The Practice of Piety* (1649)

and Samuel Hardy's *Guide to Heaven* (1673) personified the beliefs and rules that Puritans were expected to follow. Values such as a strong work ethic and closeness to God regardless of social station in life were the predominant themes in these early works. Early self-help books were the main written form outside of the Bible on giving guidance toward being a good Puritan (Starker, 1989).

According to Gordon and Bernstein (1970), "early books dealing with marriage had a strong religious flavor"(p. 226). The authors further elaborate that these books were primarily concerned with the following topics: Legal elements, roles of husbands and wives, home management, child rearing, and managing servants. These books exhibited the outward norms practiced in marriage.

Although self-help books on marriage were conservative in terms of marital sex, a small segment of marriage manuals believed that sex between spouses was natural and healthy. One example is the "Aristotle" series, a mixture of Greek philosophy, poetry, and medical advice. Since these books contained vivid sexual imagery, they were published anonymously (as cited in Starker, 1989).

In the 1700s self-help books began to reflect a secular point of view. Prior books had been written with the idea of becoming closer to God. A new philosophy of upward social mobility began to be reflected in texts. Benjamin Franklin's book *The Way to Wealth* (1757) laid out a prescriptive program that would lead to worldly abundance.

In the 1870s rigid Victorian society's morality dominated self-help books on marriage. While sex in a marriage was considered necessary for reproduction, it was also viewed as a disruptive practice that could harm society if not tempered with virtue and strong morals. In particular, the book *Plain Talks on Avoided Subjects* (1882), which

comes from the Victorian era, proclaims “that women properly ought to inhibit or excise any sexual thoughts or feelings” (as cited in Starker, 1989, p. 80). Thus, expectations of Victorian society rendered women responsible for upholding cultural order by eschewing lusty sexual urges and carnal deviancy.

As the 19th century came to a close, Victorian morals began to loosen. In a historical overview conducted by Laipson (1996), marital advice literature from 1900 to 1925 was examined, contextualizing changes that occurred within self-help books regarding sex. Advice literature of the 1900s viewed women’s sexual desire as minimal and only necessary to produce offspring, whereas men were viewed as having an innate carnality and were seen as unable to control their urges (Gordon, 1969).

Not only did marital advice books of the 1900s promote sex as a healthy part of marriage, but if a woman did not enjoy sex in the marital bedroom it was due to her husband’s inability to excite her. According to Malchow (1905), “Women may never experience the gratification and relief of intercourse and become sexually frigid through the ignorance of husband, who ever kindly disposed, does not know how to proceed” (p. 127).

Unlike the 1800s literature, self-help books in the early twentieth century supported the idea that sexual intimacy would bring husbands and wives closer together. With sex becoming accepted as a natural biological function, society and the medical community viewed men as not needing foreplay. However, it was believed that women needed foreplay to enjoy sex. Self-help books on marriage taught men to be responsible for “warming up” their wives for intercourse (Laipson, 1996, p. 511).

For example, in Robie's (1920) *Sex and Life: What the Experienced Should Teach and What the Inexperienced Should Learn*, he counsels husbands:

Kiss without shame, for she desires it, your wife's lips, tongue, neck; and, as Shakespeare says: 'If these fonts be dry, stray lower where the pleasant fountains lie' ... Kiss her nipples, arms and abdomen. Hold tenderly and manipulate softly her breasts, and delicately, when she yields nestlingly, caress her nipples. (p. 358)

Although women were now viewed as enjoying sex, experts promoted it only in marriage.

The 1930s saw the rise of women in the workforce. Public anxiety over gender roles grew as women earned their own money. Even if it was not clear who wore the pants in the family, experts were adamant about who wore them in the bedroom. Men were still expected to take the lead in sexual affairs (Laipson, 1996, p. 518).

The 1940s and 1950s saw an increase in American citizens getting married (the "baby boomer" years), as well as self-help books about marriage. Texts books such as *Love Without Fear* (Chesser, 1947) emphasized the happy and stable marriage as the cornerstone of society, and being married was a "struggle of shared life" (Starker, 1989, p. 88). Marriage was not about the individual, but a joining of two people who functioned as one. Spock (1955) discussed marriage in the context of how it affects children. Husbands and wives are to be addressed as mothers and fathers. He suggested that if marital tension exists there "are professional people in several fields ready to help couples to understand and overcome existing difficulties" (p. 31). In addition, books such as Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1968) became part of a national dialogue on sexuality. Popular media

such as *Time* reported on Kinsey's books, and the books were referenced in a part of a popular Tony Award-winning Broadway musical *Kiss Me Kate*.

During the 1960s and 1970s self-help books exploded with the concept of the "self" or the personality as the key to understanding adult behavior (Starker, 1989). Books focused on themes of autonomy and self-actualization, becoming the best self, while freedom of choice struck a chord with the nation. For example, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) brought to widespread attention how dissatisfied housewives were with their roles. Many women felt lost and lacked in personal direction after their children left. Additionally, Friedan's book promoted women completing higher education in order to find satisfying work within the community. *The Feminine Mystique*, a self-help book, has a prescriptive nature that advocates women looking outside of the home for self fulfillment and engaging in a challenging job.

Following the quest for completion of one's needs in the 1960s, the next decade found self-help books expanding on the theme of personal happiness. One primary example is *Open Marriage* (O'Neill & O'Neill, 1973). Whereas the previous two decades of self-help books emphasized marital roles, duties, and sex between spouses, *Open Marriage* espoused a radical change from the traditional, patriarchal forms of marriage. Instead of viewing wedlock as a burden to be shared by both husband and wife, the O'Neills advocated a marriage where in the individual self should be the most important element in matrimony. Another concept that the O'Neills advocated was divorce. They believed it should not be regarded as socially undesirable but considered a benefit to the individual when marriage no longer served the wife's or husband's needs.

The 1960s and 1970s signified a radical shift from the former conservatism and social norms that were espoused in prior decades. Putting the individual above the community or social order became acceptable. In the 1970s books such as *The Intimate Enemy: How to Fight Fair in Love and Marriage* (Bach, 1970) and *Love is Letting Go of Fear* (Jampolsky, 1979) began to have access to a wider audience because chain bookstores like Waldenbooks and B. Daltons began to move into shopping malls. In addition, self-help authors such as Geri Tully, who wrote *Don't Be a Wife – Be a Mistress* (1968), gained greater recognition by appearing on television programs such as *The Phil Donahue Show* to promote their books (The Llewellyn Encyclopedia, 2009). Because the paperbacks could be sold in the local grocery store, self-help books now were able to reach a larger share of the audience than previously (Starker, 1989).

The 1970s theme of exploring the self continued into the 1980s. However, the expectation was to improve the physical body. Self-help books on diet, exercise, and personal appearance continued to rise in the early 1980s (Steinberg, 1983). Books with titles such as *The Beverly Hills Diet* (Mazel, 1984), *Richard Simmons' Never Say Diet* (1982), and *Jane Fonda's Workout Book* (1984) proliferated stores' racks. According to Starker (1989), social gatherings were dominated by “talk of diet plans, vitamins, and running shoes” (p. 135). Baby boomers who had reached their mid thirties desired to maintain a youthful life style and appearance.

Relationship texts were also present in bookstores alongside the diet and workout books that had become popular. *Marriage Workout: A Marital Enrichment Workbook* (Messina, 1986) was influenced by workout books that populated store shelves. *The Silicon Syndrome: A Survival Handbook for Couples* (Holland, 1983) and *The Silicon*

Syndrome: How to Survive a High-Tech Relationship (Holland, 1989) recognized that a higher percentage of the workforce were entering the technology field and that the resultant effects on relationships were important. Holland (1989) explained that due to the highly analytical nature of the jobs centered in technology, people who were employed by the computer industry frequently had a difficult time understanding their spouses' emotions. This in turn would create problems in how the individuals related to each other.

Additionally, whereas the 1960s were typified feminism and self-help books like *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), the 1990s saw a big rise of self-help books geared toward men's issues. Books such as Robert Bly's *Iron John* (1990) and Steve Biddulph's *Manhood* (1995) promoted tapping into the "deep masculine" (Singleton, 2004, p.154), something that every man supposedly possessed. Men were able to discover this aspect of self by initiations, holding rituals, and connecting with other men.

Books that came out in the early 1990s focused on men reclaiming their masculinity, and new books were published on relationship enhancement. A best selling example is John Gray's *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* (1992). This book sold over seven million copies (Zimmerman et al., 2001). For many readers, Mars and Venus stopped being celestial planets, and became a way to explain how differently men and women relate to each other. Although *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* was published seventeen years ago, John Gray has published eight books along the same vein. His most current book is *Why Mars and Venus Collide: Improving Relationships by Understanding How Men and Women Cope Differently with Stress* (2008).

Looking at self-help books in a historical context, it becomes obvious how they have permeated the American culture. Self-help books have been around since early colonial times and the industry has only gotten bigger. One important arena in which self-help books have made and continue to make substantial inroads is in the mental health profession.

Professional Counseling Use of Self-Help Literature

The 1990s found many academic papers urging professional counselors to use self-help books in their practice (see, for example, Gould & Clum, 1993; Kurtzweid, Scoggin, & Rosen, 1996; Mars, 1995). The term that describes self-help books used by therapists is *bibliotherapy*, and according to a survey 85% of psychologists assign such books in their administered therapy (Norcross et al., 2000). With such a high percentage of psychologists recommending self-help books, the literature has another mechanism for entering common usage.

Most of the pertinent research on bibliotherapy consisted of position papers that contained personal opinion and lacked empirical research (Rosen et al., 2003). Furthermore, some of the papers on bibliotherapy contradicted each other. For example, Glasgow and Rosen (1978) looked at 90 studies and realized that fear and anxiety as well as weight loss could be helped by bibliotherapy but not sexual dysfunction, whereas Craighead, McNamara, and Horan (1984) noticed that bibliotherapy was useful for fear/anxiety and sexual dysfunction but not for weight loss. Shrunken and Engles (1981) found that only fear/anxiety and neither sexual dysfunction nor weight loss were usefully treated by bibliotherapy. Unfortunately, the reviewers of self-help books could not agree on what problems bibliotherapy could be helpful in treating.

The 1990s saw development of consumer guides for the general public to help in choosing self-help books, which were often based on a therapist's personal preference. Furthermore, much of the academic literature on self-help books lacked specific recommendations on what self-help books to integrate into therapy (Campbell & Smith, 2003; Rosen et al., 2003). Finally, *The Authoritative Guide to Self Help Books* (Santrock, Minnett, & Campbell, 1994) relied on surveys from 500 experts in clinical and counseling psychology in order to determine which books were valuable to use.

Although many psychologists use bibliotherapy as a part of their treatment plans, some have questioned self-help books' usefulness and effectiveness (Pearsall, 2005). Many of the self-help books have not been empirically tested in regards to how effective they are for treatment. According to Rosen, Glasgow and Moore (2003), only 15 studies were conducted on bibliotherapy during the 1990s. In contrast to the documented popularity of published self-help books, this number seems paltry and suggest the subject is under researched.

Self-help books have been a part of the American landscape literally for centuries. They have been a component of our history and continue to guide us. In addition to the regular consumer purchasing self-help books, many counselors and psychologists have used them to treat their patients. Examining these books on a deeper thematic level would contribute to an understanding of the perspectives inherent in marital self-help books of the early 21st century.

Theoretical Perspectives

This study will be informed by social constructionism and relational dialectics. Social constructionism posits that we take the world and our reality for granted.

According to Gergen (1985), social constructionism is concerned with “ explicating the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live” (p. 266). Therefore, social constructionism is an epistemological position that aims to shed light upon the ways in which virtually all day-to-day phenomena are socially constructed through discourse and interaction with other people.

Social Constructionism

In their influential work, Berger and Luckmann (1966) created a four-stage schema to explain how reality becomes taken for granted. First, *typification* occurs when people sort their perceptions into types of categories, such as race and social class. Second, typification become *institutionalized*; examples include marriage and education. Next comes *legitimization*, which can be achieved by writing and publishing books such as self-help texts on marriage. Finally, the process of *typification, institutionalization, and legitimization* combined, becomes *reification*.

According to Berger and Kellner (1985), one way that people can make sense of their reality is through marriage. Berger and Kellner believe significant relationships, marriage in particular, give strength and reliability to the world. Furthermore marriage is a significant relationship that contributes to the identity of adults.

Relational Dialectics

While Relational dynamics are understood in part through a social constructionist lens, relational dialectics provide a differently focused look at such dynamics. Relational dialectics can be useful in examining conflict and understanding tensions that form in a relationship (Baxter, 1990). This theory is discussed in books on marital counseling

(Waldron & Kelley, 2009) as well as counseling practices. It examines the oppositional forces or contradictions that can occur in a relationship. According to Baxter and Braithwaite (2008), “Relational dialectics theory is a theory of the meaning-making between relationship parties that emerges from the interplay of competing discourses” (p. 349). These competing discourses are necessary and inevitable in a relationship.

While this theory points to the complexities and even seeming oppositional poles in relationships, currently there is a lack of studies that address whether popular relationship texts reflect such intricacies. For example, some of the specific issues addressed by dialectic theory as applied to committed relationships are autonomy-connection and openness-closedness. The autonomy-connection dialectic focuses on the contradictory pull of maintaining one’s individuality and establishing connectedness with one’s relationship partner. The openness-closedness dialectic expresses the desire to disclose and be open with the relational partner, and the desire to maintain privacy (Hoppe-Nagao & Ting-Toomey, 2002).

Baxter and Montgomery (1996) believe that relational dialectics theory is a way to view the patterns of interpersonal relationships. Relationship dialectics is deeply influenced by Mikhail Bakhtin’s dialogism. Bakhtin believed that we could only understand ourselves through interacting with another person. He focused on the salience of language in interaction, and furthermore proposed that centripetal and centrifugal forces continually influence how we experience language in relationships (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Through dialogue we can understand abstract cultural, historical, and relational phenomena; discourse holds social existence together (Montgomery & Baxter, 1998).

Bakhtin's work strongly influenced Montgomery and Baxter's perspective on relational dialectics: "From the perspective of relational dialectics, social life exists in and through people's communicative practices, by which people give voice to multiple (perhaps even infinite) opposing tendencies" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p.4). Montgomery and Baxter (1998) argue that the dialogue of social life is unfinished and ongoing; in it the polyphony of dialectical voices struggle against one another to be heard, and in that struggle they set the stage for future contradictions.

Baxter and Montgomery (1996) describe relational dialectics as a perspective that is ". . . uniquely patterned and richly colored by the dialogic complexities of communicating in personal relationships, with the common dialectic thread of contradiction, change, praxis and totality" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, pp. 6-7). Contradiction is viewed as something negative, inconsonant or illogical in a person's reasoning or action. In dialectics there is frequently the tendency to present contradictions as binary opposites—for instance, openness versus closedness, autonomy versus connection, and certainty versus novelty. These binary oppositions are often viewed as destructive and negative to relationships. According to relational dialectics, however, contradictions are "complex, overlapping domains of *centripetal* or dominant forces juxtaposed with *centrifugal* or countervailing forces (Montgomery & Baxter, 1998, p. 157). Therefore, the tensions are not opposite of each other but simply live in the shadows of one another. For example, instead of only having certainty vs. unpredictability, there is also the possibility of certainty-excitement, certainty-mystery and so on. Contradictions should not be viewed as destructive to a relationship. Instead,

they represent the basic drivers for relational growth (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Montgomery & Baxter, 1998).

The next idea of relational dialectical theory is the concept of change. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) argue that shifting is not directed toward some necessary ideal or state; change simply means that the relationship will move from place to place. Oppositions can take a back-and-forth flavor as well as using nonrepeating moves, which results in a permanent shift. In relational dialectics this kind of change is labeled spiral change. A spiral involves recurrence but recognizes that phenomena never repeat in identical form.

The third tenet of dialectics is called “praxis” where people are actors and objects of their own actions (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). It is through communication that the actors, people who participate in the process, practice their relationship. The proactive actors make communicative choices about how to function in their social world. The actors eventually become reactive objects because they create and recreate through active participation and interaction, and therefore establish the boundaries of subsequent communicative moves. Each communicative move is unique but informed by prior interactions, which in turn inform future events.

The last concept of relational dialectic theory is “totality.” According to a relational dialectic perspective, tensions can only be understood in relation to other tensions (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). According to Golden, Kirby & McMillan (2006):

The interplay between autonomy and interdependence has often been identified by dialectical theorists as the most central of all relational contradictions. . . . The work-life interrelationship as representing a variation on this pervasive contradiction, in which work is associated primarily with autonomy . . . and

personal life is associated with interdependence . However, we must also recognize this dialectic is experienced in both work and personal life. (p. 168)

The dialectics cannot be understood in isolation; they must be studied together to gain the true implications of each other.

Relational dialectic theory can be a way to view the world as a process of relations or interdependence. Dialectical tensions do not exist in the individual but are part of the relationship. Each person brings her or his own personal issues into an association, and can contribute to the communicative practices in a relationship. Furthermore, dialectical tensions may not obviously or consciously be felt in the liason, yet they change the relationship without either party having awareness of them (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

Relational dialectics is a theory that can help explain the complexity of relational dynamics. If this theory is represented in self-help books it can assist married couples to understand their conflicts and differences that may emerge. It can also help husbands and wives know what is truly occurring in their conflicts so those issues can be better managed.

This study creates awareness and a deeper understanding of self-help books perspectives contribute to the practice of marriage. Marital counselors' awareness can promote making effective recommendations to their patients, thus helping clients meet their goals. Finally, this study helps to fill in the gap of academic literature by presenting a thematic analysis of self-help books on marriage.

Marriage is a challenging partnership, and married couples seek advice to help and improve their relationship. Therefore the research purpose is concerned how self-help

books on marriage frame the institution. Secondly, this project asks to what degree self-help books on marriage acknowledge relational dialectics.

CHAPTER TWO: METHOD

This study analyzed a sample of popular marriage self-help books from the last ten years (1998-2008). In order to study the texts from a social constructionist standpoint, thematic analysis was undertaken. In addition, the marriage self-help books were examined to see if they reflected the complexities of relational dialectics.

Texts

A sample of texts was chosen from the ten-year period 1998-2008. First, texts included in the sampling frame were identified by their specific subject matter. Since the study's intent is to look at marriage self-help books, self-help texts with the word "marriage" either in the title or subtitle were selected.

Second, this study wanted to identify popular press books that had the greatest degree of prominence regarding the practice of marriage. In order to accomplish this, books that appeared most frequently on The *New York Times* bestseller list in the "Advice, How to, and Miscellaneous" category (that encompasses all the books on relationship enhancement) were chosen. In order for a book to appear on the *New York Times* bestseller list in a given week it must sell enough copies to warrant "Top 10" status (Zimmerman et al., 2001, p. 124).

Next, *Publisher's Weekly* bestseller list was examined. *Publisher's Weekly* is a trade magazine targeted at publishers, librarians, booksellers and literary agents that contains reviews of books, as well as bestseller lists. First the "nonfiction hardback"

bestseller list was analyzed, and then the “mass market hardback” bestseller list was inspected during the years 1998-2008.

Although looking at bestseller lists is one way to determine what books are contributing to our culture, they do not always give an accurate figure of how many books are being consumed by the public. Publishing industries do not release statistics on how many of their books they sell. Furthermore, it is left up to booksellers to report how much product they have sold and frequently they base their numbers off anticipated sales (Woodstock, 2007; Woudstra, 2007).

Since bookselling lists are not always accurate, Amazon.com was chosen as a final source in selecting the sample. In 2006 Amazon had sales figures of \$10.71 billion, more than Barnes and Noble, and Borders Book Group. With such high figures it was a logical choice to see what marriage books were popular with the public. Amazon.com ranks over 6 million books according to a complex formula. For this method a logarithm takes into account hourly, daily and monthly sales. The length of time between sales is also a factor in determining sales rank. Various websites have taken a guess on the formulation of the sales rank, but Amazon.com keeps it a well-guarded secret (Amazon sales rank n.d.; Sampson, 2006).

The following categories were searched on Amazon.com: Marriage, and marriage and family. In order to get the sample down to a manageable size, only the books with a sales rank of 20 or lower were considered for the sample. Since sales ranks fluctuate on a daily basis the categories were monitored over a time period of four months in order to see what books stayed consistently within the top 20 sales rank and met the prior criteria of having marriage in the title or subtitle, and been published between 1998-2008.

After going through the process of examining the *New York Times* and *Publisher's Weekly* bestseller lists as well as examining Amazon.com, two books emerged that fit the criteria. These books provide a snapshot of widely purchased marriage self-help texts. Laura Schlessinger's *The Proper Care & Feeding of Marriage*, originally published in 2007, was the first book selected for analysis. Schlessinger currently has a radio show that ranks third highest among commercial radio shows (*The Top Talk*, 2008). According to Schlessinger's website, her radio program has approximately 8.5 million listeners weekly (Foley, 2000).

The second book selected for this study was John Gottman's *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* (1999). Gottman currently runs The Gottman Institute and has published numerous books on marriage. He has appeared on television shows such as *Oprah*, *Good Morning America*, *Today*, and *CBS Morning News*. He has had articles written about him in *The New York Times*, *People*, *Newsweek*, *Redbook* and *Glamour* (The Gottman Institute).

Both Schlessinger and Gottman have groups on Yahoo started independently by people who are interested in their work. In addition, doing a Google search on Schlessinger results in over 237,000 hits. Gottman brings up over 125,000 hits. Finally, both have extensive reviews of their books listed on Amazon.com.

Procedures

Data Collection

This study sought to understand the themes contained in *The Proper Care and Feeding of Marriage* and *The Seven Steps to Making Marriage Work*. Therefore, it used thematic analysis to make sense of the data. Thematic analysis seeks to find some level

of patterned response or meaning within a data set and captures something important about the research question (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clark, 2006). Using this method s revealed the implicit and explicit themes in both self-help books.

Data collection started with reading each book in its entirety. According to Tesch (1990), the text should be read several times in order to get a sense of the text. Since the unit of analysis for this study is the chapter, each was examined to find the key thoughts or impressions. Certain concepts and ideas become obvious through repetition, bold font and italicizing. The repetition of ideas may appear without using the same precise words (Owen, 1984; Bernard & Ryan, 2003).

Developing Themes

Both texts were examined for important concepts and ideas. Once the researcher identified the main concepts and ideas in a chapter they were underlined (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Words or phrases that were repeated, bolded or italicized had a rectangle drawn around them. After the text was underlined for important concepts and ideas, the process of cutting and sorting began. Cutting and sorting is a technique described by Bernard and Ryan (2003) that helps to move the data into categories or themes. Once the text had been underlined the quotations from the texts were transcribed into word processing. Once that was completed by the researcher, each quotation was cut out and pasted on an index card. Next, the quotations were laid on a table and sorted into similar piles. Then each pile was named, thus creating themes. Once the themes were identified a second round was conducted to identify dimensions of the themes by seeing how the quotations under a theme were different. The final step was to identify what themes both books had in common, as well as how their themes were different.

Determining Relational Dialectics Within Chapters

Chapter-by-chapter analysis of whether relational dialectics were acknowledged, either explicitly or implicitly in the pages of the text, was conducted. Each chapter was examined for the three primary dialectics: Openness vs. closedness, autonomy vs. connection, and certainty vs. novelty. Although the chapters were examined for the three primary dialectics, notice was taken of any other possible dialectic that could emerge.

Each chapter was examined for the author's treatment or lack of relational dialectics. For example, the dialectic of openness vs. closedness may be addressed by the level of disclosure the author recommends, or if the author advises to keep readers emotions, feelings or issues to themselves. Autonomy vs. connection may be represented by whether the author acknowledges that the individuals in the marriage are separate beings or if she or he recommends they function as an interdependent unit. Certainty vs. novelty may be recognized by the author describing the level of predictability that should be present in the relationship, or if the couple can introduce variety to keep their relationship exciting.

Once the chapters were examined and the interplay of dialectics identified, instances of relational dialectics were studied further. If dialectics were not present in the chapter, no further work was done. By the end of the text examinations, an understanding emerged about the extent of dialectics' presence in these bestselling marriage self-help books.

CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS

This study sought to understand how self-help books on matrimony frame marriage, and whether they invoke relational dialectics. Thematic analysis revealed how Laura Schlessinger and John Gottman view marriage.

Themes from *The Proper Care & Feeding of Marriage*

Table 1. Themes from *The Proper Care and Feeding of a Marriage*

Themes from <i>The Proper Care and Feeding of a Marriage</i>
Feminism is destructive to marriage
Feminism has taught women to disdain men
Feminism denies women their true nature
Contrary to feminism, real women put their family first
Men and women have different traits
Accepting the masculine and feminine traits ensures a happy marriage
Women need to support their husbands
Family of Origin
A marriage is about each other

Feminism is Destructive to Marriage

The first theme present in *The Proper Care & Feeding of Marriage* was feminism. In addition, six subthemes deserve attention. Schlessinger presents the overarching theme of feminism in a negative manner. Feminism is viewed as central to a

left-wing political agenda.

Schlessinger describes feminism as one of the primary causes of the destruction of American society: “Feminism! Feminism has been a scourge upon the land and upon women, children, men, and ultimately, families and society” (pp. 26-27).

Although Schlessinger elaborates that certain ideas of feminism are positive, she maintains that overall, feminism has denigrated both men and women. Schlessinger explains:

The true ideal of feminism—that men and women should have the same rights and opportunities—is an obvious positive civil rights issue. But that is not the feminism that has ever dominated. The feminist movement was totally co-opted by a mentality that despised femininity, motherhood, wifehood, and men in all forms except castrated (p. 27).

Schlessinger believes that feminism has become engrained in our culture and is being taught in our schools. To illustrate her points she cites examples from listeners who call in to her radio program, The Dr. Laura show, seeking advice. Erica, a listener to the Dr. Laura Show, wrote in about how she was indoctrinated with feminism in high school. According to her letter she took a women’s studies class and began to feel “...ANGRY and POWERFUL. I suddenly became a militant feminist” (p. 28). She continued into college participating in the feminist culture. Not until she fell in love with a Christian, whom she eventually married, did she begin to enjoy domestic duties such as laundry, cooking, and cleaning.

Feminism is clearly described by Schlessinger as something from which people need to be rescued. One male listener explained, “I am married to a feminist psychology professor—envy me. My life under the feminist Taliban has been a mixture of guilt mingled with hopelessness and despair” (p. 27). What makes it so disagreeable is that

women use feminism to be self-centered and focus on their happiness, problems, and agenda. A “feminist prison” (p. 30) is how one woman described the time in her life when she subscribed to the left-wing ideology.

According to Schlessinger, feminism does not acknowledge that women may have different desires and goals. “Everything I want, what makes me happy as a woman (being at home, having children, having a knight in shining armor) is spit upon by two kinds of people, chauvinists and feminists). They’re one and the same thing. Vile, loathsome, selfish people...” (p. 29). Schlessinger’s listeners continually praise her for emphasizing that women should behave in a traditional manner: “Thank you so very much, Dr. Laura, for encouraging us female types to be feminine, not feminist” (p. 211).

To Schlessinger and many of her listeners, feminism is a lie. It requires women to fulfill too many jobs. Wives will only become run down and ragged if they attempt to live up to the feminist ideology:

I was raised to believe that I could be all and do all. That philosophy soon crashed into reality. I had a career, a husband, a child, and a home—and I expected to be able to manage it all. With great fatigue, I realized I was doing a pretty poor job of it. Then I realized the feminist movement had robbed us all. (p. 31)

Feminism Has Taught Women to Disdain Men

The first subtheme demonstrates how feminism has allowed men to be treated and viewed in a demeaning manner. As a result of feminism, men began acting selfishly and immaturely. This is due in part to a focus on men as oppressors and enemies. In addition, feminism is blamed for twisting marriage into a form of patriarchal control and domination.

Schlessinger argues that the political arena and the workplace were not the center of feminism, commenting that “. . . feminism did not focus on equal pay for equal work,

but on how marriage, husbands, men in general, and children in specific were the enemies of true womanhood” (p. 4). She insists feminism has led women to disdain men and all that is masculine. As a result, generations of women who behave destructively in relationships and in marriage coexist with men who are behaving less and less in a masculine manner.

Schlessinger expresses great compassion for men, and generally blames women for the bad state of marriage. She blames a shift in culture and how men are regarded. “I am honest and embarrassed to say that over the last half century, the tide has turned seriously hostile and demeaning toward men and masculinity” (p. 38). Schlessinger cites four different television commercials as examples of belittling men, arguing that if women were shown in such a negative light, women’s groups would protest the makers of the products.

Schlessinger places the blame for this shift in the attitudes toward men squarely on feminism: “Feminism has brainwashed women to believe that all men are inconsiderate beasts you can’t rely on” (p. 36). She contends it is this thought that has created fear and distrust in women; therefore, they are loath to give up their independence. Schlessinger fears that women will continue to value their independence more than their marriage and family, ultimately becoming unhappy and resentful.

On her daily talk show Schlessinger asked, “In what way(s) would you consider yourself a recovered feminist and what parts of the feminist agenda have you dropped and why?” (p. 27). Many women felt that feminism viewed men in a negative manner. After compiling the on-air answers, Schlessinger found that many women felt that feminism was about “. . . hating men, but at the same time encouraging detestable

behavior in men” (p. 30). Schlessinger sees men’s poor behavior as a result of feminism and the desire for women to keep their independence. She points out that men begin abdicating their responsibility as the sole financial supporter of their family.

Schlessinger continues her assault on feminism by suggesting that men no longer treat women as ladies because “Chivalry is largely dead and feminism is the killer” (p. 3). No longer do women treat their husbands with awe and respect. Instead, Schlessinger accuses women of treating men as a mere accessory (p. 39). Rather than appreciating the masculine qualities that make a man, feminism causes women to feminize men and reduce them to girlfriend status. Schlessinger insists that women must accept masculinity in a man and stop trying to abolish it in order for women, men, and marriages to become happier.

Feminism Denies Women Their True Nature

It comes as no surprise that Schlessinger believes feminism has robbed women of their “true self.” In addition to feminism maligning and demeaning men, it has also denied women their true nature. Schlessinger explains the that attack began on women before men:

How and why did the feminist movement create such enmity for men? First it is important to recognize that the enmity was also directed at women—a kind of self loathing of nurturing breasts, life-producing uterus, and an emotionally sensitive, nurturing spirit. (p. 28)

Feminism further erred by abandoning “. . . all the virtues of womanhood (modesty, tact, subtlety, civility) and adopted all the vices of men (promiscuity, vulgarity, aggressiveness)” (p. 30). According to Schlessinger, because they have adopted masculine vices, women are now doomed to lead unhappy lives.

Feminism pushes masculine actions as being a right of women, but in the end

“ . . . feminism robbed women of their ability to find joy and happiness” (pp. 31-32).

Schlessinger teaches that it is a woman’s natural inclination to want to get married, have babies, and stay home to raise children. If women do not acknowledge this need, they will be at odds with what comes “naturally” to them.

Schlessinger maintains that feminism is not just an ideology or a cultural shift; it is an illness or a disease that women must recover from in order to become aligned with their true purpose of womanhood. Accordingly, it was not until Schlessinger had her first child that she acknowledged learning what her true power was:

Having Deryk cured me finally from feminism. I learned that domesticity was not a put-down at all; it was the power to set the tone for the whole family experience starting with the ambience of the home. Houses become homes when women make them so (p. 136).

According to Schlessinger, part of women’s nature is to want a man, but “when women do acknowledge wanting a man ‘they can count on,’ they still get grief from the feminists” (p. 35). Feminism has created unrealistic needs and punishing women for following their true feminine nature. Through this lens feminism is viewed as an “all or nothing” mentality. Either one is aligned with one’s feminine nature, or is against marriage, family, and home.

Feminism denies women what they truly want, according to Schlessinger: “I believe that women crave the bedrock characteristics that are ‘masculine.’ That is true in spite of cultural pressures working against women appreciating masculinity and having appreciated and respect what a ‘man’ can offer” (p. 34). Schlessinger submits that even though women long for the masculine, our culture, which is a byproduct of feminism, tells women to ignore that need, once again denying women their true nature.

Feminism is blamed for painting women as oppressed and demeaned by their

husbands if they choose to stay home and fulfill the traditional role of wife. One listener of the Dr. Laura Show, Tasha, applauds Schlessinger for positively promoting the traditional wife role. “Thank you Dr. Laura, for instilling in me a ‘maiden’ attitude when I can encourage my knight to go out and fight, and then welcome him home to heal from his battles. Words cannot express my gratitude to women like me, who are doing their best to create peaceful palaces” (p. 94). Taking this romanticized view of traditional marriages sends a clear message that the wife staying home, while the husband works, is the ideal way of being true to the female nature.

Contrary to Feminism, Real Women Put Their Families First

Although Schlessinger promotes traditional marriage she does point out that it is irrelevant what career a woman chooses as long as she is “his woman” and “a woman” to her husband. “Sadly it is all too typical for women to want to be seen by their men *as* the high-powered position they have at work instead of *as a woman*, with those special attributes that are natural to her and yearned for by her man” (pp. 13-14). Having a career is considered taking on masculine attributes, which Schlessinger argues causes issues in a marriage.

Feminism is blamed for taking women out of the home and into the workforce, making women prioritize their careers over family. One listener called in lamenting how her twenty-five year marriage was coming to an end. She felt that men in general could not accept a powerful woman. Schlessinger replied, “I don’t think the problem they have is with her being powerful. I think the problem they have is when that *powerful woman* doesn’t know how to be just *his woman* when she comes home” (p. 23). This illustrates that women need to remember what their roles are at work, and at home. Trying to carry

work full time both in and out of the house can have negative effects on home life.

Schlessinger clearly believes that once a woman has children she should stay home. She explains what it means to be a “real woman”: “Being a real woman is someone who has no shame in being a wife and a mother, and puts her career on hold until the kids are grown. A real woman is available emotionally, spiritually, and physically for her man. She is selfless, and in doing so loves herself because she has so much to offer” (p. 32). The “real woman” concept continues through the text.

Schlessinger suggests that a woman’s fear of losing her independence contributes to what prohibits that woman from being a “real woman.” “Therefore the threat goes, never give up your independence. This mentality has confused and frightened women into an avoidance of becoming dependant on their men” (p. 36). Schlessinger maintains that feminism has cultivated a lack of trust in men to take care of their families. This lack of trust results in women fighting with men, ending in misery, all because they are not fulfilling their true desire of taking care of children and home.

Schlessinger suggests another way in which women fail to put their family first is by thinking they focus on their family of origin instead of their husband. One example is a letter from Stacey who had recently lost her father to cancer. She was so concerned with taking care of her mother’s needs that she was not paying attention to her husband. Only through listening to Schlessinger’s radio show was she able to understand she was being selfish by not putting her husband’s needs before her own.

Listening to your show made me realize that I need to put my feelings of sadness aside and not deny my husband his happiness. This past weekend I made a point to spend the entire time with my husband doing the things he enjoys doing. (p. 21)

Stacey points out that simply being present and doing the domestic duties was not enough.

I had finally realized that all this time this wonderful man was understanding and supportive, and here I was not paying attention to his needs. Sure the house was clean and the food was on the table, but he didn't receive the 'love' he so greatly deserved. (p. 21)

According to Schlessinger, modern women are far too concerned about what they can get out of a relationship instead of what they can do for their husband. "Any woman too high on her horse to understand how important her moral support is to her man's masculinity (and willingness to fight the dragons of life) misses out on real woman power" (p. 20). Unquestionably, the message is that a woman lacks "real woman power" if she does not give her husband love and support.

Men and Women Have Different Traits

Schlessinger focuses on the differences between men and women because she considers our lack of appreciation for genetic differences a big "truth." Although she does admit to the sexes having commonality, it is not the commonality that she teaches will bring marriages together, but understanding the differences and appreciating and supporting those differences. The following analogy is used to illustrate the differences between men and women:

But it will always be the truth: Men and women are as different as bananas and peaches. Sure as fruits they have commonality, but differences, texture, consistency, flavor, color response to heat and cold, and nutritional content dictate a uniqueness that is to be appreciated, not criticized or dismissed in some bizarre notion that it hurts the banana if the peach is pink." (pp. 1-2)

Schlessinger maintains that acknowledging these traits will make men and women realize that their different traits complete each other. Women are constantly being reminded that the sexes are different:

That there are differences between men and women—and that those differences are complementary—and that’s why they need each other; equality does not imply sameness; modern women don’t seem to accept their own human, feminine nature, and they fight their natural inclinations; femininity is not a disease to be cured; value, morals, and modesty are important. (p. 26)

Men and women need each other, says Schlessinger. “This is because what is hard-wired into feminine and masculine DNA and hearts is a need, a yearning for the completion of their beings: the interdependence of masculine and feminine” (p. 33). Traditional marriage is argued as the best solution for this need for completion. Each person fulfills a role that is set into his or her molecular makeup. Schlessinger further elaborates on the hardwiring of men and women:

Guys have testosterone and a brain wired for appropriate aggression—but your basic guy uses that aggression in sports, business, and war. Issues of being interested in the visual with respect to women, or having sex are important—that is built into the wiring of a female. Would women want to hear as a criticism that they spend much too much time on the interpersonal versus the intellectual? (p. 39).

Once again it appears as if Schlessinger is chastising women, this time for not accepting men for their natural masculine glory.

Regardless of the progress we have made in equal rights between the sexes or what men or women think they want, according to Schlessinger we are pulled back into our genetics or what is “natural” with a desire for traditional roles. “. . .The ‘times’ are irrelevant to the true needs of men and women to be true to their own natures. Please stop making politically correct social agendas out of the simple needs of a woman for a man and a man for a woman. . . . it is essential to support what is the ultimate truth in each

other . . . ” (p. 45).

These “natural” ways of being can make communication difficult between men and women because “there are inherent difficulties in communication between men and women: Most difficulties are surmountable—as each is willing to understand, accept, and somewhat cater to the characteristics of masculine and feminine” (p. 33).

Schlessinger argues that if we accept these differences as truth, and accommodate each other, we can have an easier time communicating with each other.

Accepting the Masculine and Feminine Traits Ensures a Happy Marriage

One of the issues that can result in a marriage failing, contends Schlessinger, is the lack of understanding and recognizing that both men and women bring different traits into the marriage. A happy marriage results from men and women accepting these traits:

If one doesn’t understand, admire, respect, and at times forgive, the nuances of the opposite sex, then the beauty and satisfaction that can arise from the uniting of man and woman in the most important covenant of marriage will not be discovered and enjoyed. (p. 11)

Only through understanding and accepting their feminine nature will women be happy, says Schlessinger. As one of her listeners wrote, “I no longer apologize for my conservative and traditional values. In other words, I am much happier as a woman rather than wishing I was a man” (p. 31). Schlessinger teaches that a happy woman follows a traditional path in raising children and being married, explaining that if women do not adhere to their true nature, they are destined to unhappiness.

Regardless of what achievements a woman earns, Schlessinger states, “I believe that no matter how financially successful and powerful a woman is, she naturally wants to be protected and provided for her by her man—it is what makes her feel more womanly” (p. 34). The message Schlessinger conveys is clear: Women truly do not want

to be the breadwinner. They would much rather stay home and take care of the home and children. Following this line of reasoning, a woman who is responsible for the financial stability of the home will become resentful and bitter.

Finally, many of the Dr. Laura Show's listeners voiced that they had not fully recognized the role differences between men and women until they were married. Men did not care about housekeeping, or any other domestic duty. Women made decisions primarily on emotional input versus sound logical facts. The consensus opinion Schlessinger maintains in her book is that "...to make marriage work, men and women need to respect their gender differences and personality differences" (p. 88).

Women Need to Support Their Husbands

Although a prior subtheme of feminism dealt with putting the family first, this next subtheme deals with supporting the husband. As previously noted, husbands and men are continuously taken for granted in a feminist dominated culture, while it is the wife's duty to bring out the best in her man. "A well treated husband will definitely become the best man possible" (p. 101). No mention is made of the husband's need to take care of his wife.

Schlessinger argues that only by supporting the husband will a wife be happy. As Marla observes, "By making him more important than me and considering his feelings above mine it actually works out that I get everything I want" (p. 32). Once again, the wife's happiness is predicated on her ability to care for her husband. Schlessinger's view of putting him first provides the only method for women to truly attain peace and harmony within themselves.

Society has made women unable to truly fulfill their natures because:

Our culture has made two things perfectly clear: anything she does that benefits her husband points out her oppression; if he doesn't do at least half her work once he comes home from work; he's a heartless, lazy, selfish bastard who doesn't care about her or the family. (p. 138)

The view that a man has a job outside of the home and a woman has the job inside the home prevails throughout the book. Rarely is it taken into account that the wife may be working a double shift. Most of the advice is directed at "traditional" wives. "I often ask women who complain about their men not doing the laundry if they drop everything and rush to their husband's work during the day to do the filing or take the meetings. Of course they say 'No.' Then I follow up, 'Why do you expect him to do your work?'"(p. 61). Wives are expected to take care of all domestic duties in the home, and support their husband's time off from his job.

Along with taking care of the home a wife has a duty to maintain her physical appearance. This is also addressed by Schlessinger. One of her listeners called in upset that her husband complained that she needed to lose weight. In response Schlessinger asked, "Well, is it true? Are you fat and sloppy, or no? If you are, why can't he express dismay over something that *is* under your control and is an obligation of yours?" She had been trying to turn it around to make him insensitive and hurtful for simply expressing 'his woman' wasn't doing her best to stay his woman" (p. 125). This example demonstrates Schlessinger's view that it is the wife's obligation to maintain her appearance throughout the marriage. Not doing so indicates she is changing and no longer the woman he married.

Schlessinger also instructs her female callers to verbally support their husband. For example, "Honey, I know you will be able to find a way to take care of this situation

because I've seen you conquer problems for us many times over the year. I believe in you, he *will be able* to conquest" (p. 18). It is of the utmost importance that wives constantly reinforce their husband's masculinity. Schlessinger's viewpoint makes women responsible for maintaining the life force in their husbands.

Family of Origin

The family of origins theme, referring to the family in which one grew up, is a frequent reason as to why spouses have issues. Schlessinger argues that couples having "communication problems" is a misnomer. "I don't think that many marriages are stuck on communication problems, whatever they are. I think that most marriages are stuck on people needing or hurting so much (from their childhoods primarily)" (p. 75).

Accordingly, she maintains that only when the spouse addresses family of origins issues can a marriage be put back on track.

However, Schlessinger does address different family of origin issues such as sexual abuse and sibling rivalry. She maintains that ". . . the primary childhood issue, whether or not there was abuse or outright negligence, is the feeling of not having been important to your parents, and not getting the attention and tender loving all children crave and require" (p. 68). This results in an adult still seeking love and attention, but instead of seeking it from one's parents, a spouse is expected to fulfill that need.

Consequently, one spouse becomes so concerned with filling that loveless void that she or he neglects to send love and attention to the other.

One example from a Schlessinger listener demonstrates this subtheme regarding her relationship with her husband: ". . . considering that I have always been a self-focused, depressed person (childhood scars), my problem was a need to have him parent

me with daily reassurance. However I could see in his eyes from time to time, a longing for ME to truly KNOW that I was ok so that I could be his peaceful woman and not his anxious little girl” (p. 91). However, through seeing how hard her man worked and loving him, Schlessinger points out that she learned to take responsibility for herself. In focusing on making her husband happy, she was able to practice not being self-centered.

Schlessinger reports that putting parents ahead of one’s spouse and winning their approval can be a cause for failure in the marriage. As one Schlessinger listener explained, it wasn’t until her spouse threatened her with annulling the marriage that she took his complaints seriously: “I didn’t care too much about my husband’s opinion on things. After realizing that my husband was very serious about the annulment, I finally placed my husband as the priority and finally opened my eyes that he is not the enemy, but now my real, true family” (p. 171).

Schlessinger shares another example of the family of origin having a negative effect on a marriage:

The straw that broke the camel’s back in my listener Margaret’s first marriage (in my twenties, no children—except maybe us) was when she suggested to her husband that they repaint the apartment together and hang new curtains. This was her attempt at having them work together on their nest as a positive move in a troubled situation. He told her that he’d have to ask his mother. Camel died right there. Letting family influence decisions whether big or small in your marriage is to be a child playing grown-up. (pp. 120-121)

According to Schlessinger, maintaining boundaries is important for the life of the marriage. Family of origin should never help to determine or influence the home and marital relationship. A marriage will be stronger if spouses can make their own decisions and better yet, make decisions together.

Although Schlessinger does state that the primary childhood issue for a wife is not

feeling loved by her parents, she also uses two examples to illustrate how sexual abuse can influence a marriage. The first involves a woman in her forties. Her husband was about to testify against his father for sexually abusing him as a child. The wife was frustrated with him because he was not being sexual with her. When Schlessinger tried to explain that now was a time when she should be supporting her husband and not worrying about her own needs, the wife, instead of being understanding, complained about her own sad childhood and how she needed sex and physical affection to feel safe.

Schlessinger gave the following advice:

Well, there are times in our lives that we can't indulge ourselves in our own pain because WE ARE NEEDED. It is a blessing to be needed and a special kind of obligation that saves us from our own inner demons and turns us into forces for benevolence. The attitude I am trying to convey to you is that your needs don't matter right now. Just be sensitive and not demanding. Touch his face, shoulder, and arms with understanding affection. Listen without comment. Take walks. Connecting to you seems to mean that he does something to you. How 'bout you connect to him by becoming his support. (p. 57)

The wife in this case did not agree with Schlessinger's assessment and sent another e-mail once again describing her ugly childhood. The reader is never informed what that childhood might have been, only that it is irrelevant to her husband's needs.

The second example describes a twenty-eight year old woman who had a difficult time being kind, loving and sexual to her husband. She had been in therapy since childhood concerning sexual child abuse by her stepfather. Also, this woman had been married previously to an abusive man. The advice Schlessinger gives this wife is very different from her previous suggestion:

Dr.L: How did all that therapy help you be able to love your husband?

Caller: Well, actually it didn't. I learned that I was a victim, that nothing was my fault, and that probably my husband earned my negative feelings toward

him.

Dr.L: Brace yourself, my dear for an alternative view. I think you are feeling so safe with this nice guy, that you feel free to be the perpetrator.

Caller: What????

Dr.L: Exactly. The tables are turned and now you have control and dominance and feel safe. However you're no longer in a situation in which you have to defend yourself. This is payback against the guys—your step dad and first husband—who hurt you, but aimed at an innocent party AND your own happiness.

Don't you see that the first part of your life was taken up by predators and this, the second part of your life is also . . . except that the perp is YOU!

Caller: Whoa—I never thought about it this way, but I think you're right. What can I do?

Dr.L: Drop your guard, trust your husband, and love up and have fun with him. No more fear—just more fun.

Caller: That sounds absolutely great. No therapist ever told me anything positive I could use to be happy—it is as if they all catered to my ugly history and not any potential for a beautiful tomorrow. (pp. 173-174)

Schlessinger considers this woman's behavior as self-centered. The caller simply had to take responsibility for her own actions and feelings in order to stop being destructive in her marriage.

A Marriage is About Each Other

The final theme for *The Proper Care & Feeding of Marriage* is the idea that marriages are not about the individual. Becoming one is stressed in order to have a happy marriage; it is not about two individuals. This theme has a subtheme of teamwork. Not only do people who are married become one, but they must work together as a unit.

From the beginning of the book, Schlessinger sets up the biblical argument about men and women needing each other to be a whole person:

Societal pressures have determined to destroy the truth: a real man needs a real woman to be complete *and* real woman needs a real man to be complete; which is why you don't get too far into Genesis without a demonstration of the polarity of Adam and Eve and they are part of each other (i.e., the "rib"). (p. 4)

It is important to understand that the predominant view of this book is that men and women provide a counterpoint to each other's nature. Not recognizing this point is purported to be one of the primary reasons why marriages fail to be happy.

Once again women are demonstrated as the primary ones blamed for not understanding that men contribute substantially to women feeling "whole." Only through understanding the concept of interdependence, and that each person plays an integral part in a marriage, can either participant of a marriage be happy:

The reality is that women today do not think of themselves in the context of helping "their man." Women today have been brainwashed into thinking that efforts in that direction are in the category of oppression, subservience, and catering to frail male egos. It is sad that this is the prevalent point of view, because *interdependence* is what ultimately feeds both man and woman what they truly need to be happy. (p. 14)

Schlessinger states that it is "essential to support what is the ultimate truth in each other..." (p. 45). The two examples used both come from women. The first is from a woman who admits that although she does not listen to the program, her husband does.

When he comes home from his long travels he always holds her close and lets her know how much he appreciates her. The second example, sent to Schlessinger in an email, explains how a woman listened to the show and decided to do something her husband would enjoy. She explained how her husband is a gun enthusiast and loved going to the shooting range. Although she was not enthusiastic about going to shoot a gun she decided to go with her husband. The day went extremely well because her husband was so excited to have her there and was able to teach her how to shoot. His attention to her made her happy. Doing this had an extremely positive effect on her relationship with her husband because he appreciated her going and he felt like “the luckiest man alive” (p. 46).

This theme carries through another example of a woman who called in to the Dr. Laura Show explaining how much she sacrificed and because she got pregnant when she was eighteen. She agreed to stay home and take care of the child while her husband went to work. Schlessinger pointed out that the husband also sacrificed to become sole support of the family. In no uncertain terms Schlessinger laid down what marriage is all about. “Marriage is where you love and adore someone; you sacrifice for them, and you do everything you can to make them happy” (p. 60).

One issue that Schlessinger deals with frequently is when people lack the understanding of why somebody they had fun and agreed with while dating find out they no longer have fun or agree with their spouse. Schlessinger sternly reminds readers that marriage is a unique institution; even living together is nothing like marriage: “In ‘shacking up,’ two ambivalent people say ‘two;’ while in marriage, two committed people become ‘one’” (p. 85). Schlessinger continues to explain that living together is not a fair representation of what being married will be like. She implicitly references

studies not supporting cohabiting prior to marriage, as “higher breakup rates, domestic violence, affairs, and emotional problems demonstrate” (p. 86).

A detrimental issue Schlessinger finds in many marriages is that spouses stop making an effort to make each other happy. She implies that once marriage stops being easy many people feel that it just isn't worth their time. She frequently advises that taking the time and making the effort are obligations that married people must respect in order to have a successful marriage. “Whether it is sex and affection, showing interest in the activities and passion of your spouse, giving up something important to you because it would make a family and/or a happy spouse” (p. 107). She insists this should not be dependent on one's immediate needs and feelings; instead spouses need to view this obligation as a requirement of the marital vows.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of this theme is “the incredible power of making the other feel cared about, special, important, valued, admired, loved, and appreciated as a real man and real woman” (p. 106). Without this element in a marriage, Schlessinger predicts arguments and disagreements will be difficult to compromise or resolve. Spouses must feel adored in order to begin moving toward conciliation. From the beginning of the book Schlessinger states “a good marriage is about seeing yourselves as a team, not as competitors or enemies” (p. 21). In her view, too often couples get into arguments about who is more stressed, or does more for the family. This results in a stronger desire to win, as opposed to doing what is best for the team. Both husband and wife are equally important in a marriage, although both serve different needs for the marriage to be healthy.

From Schlessinger's perspective, thinking of oneself as an individual while

believing that the other person does not appreciate what one does will result in spouses feeling resentful. This becomes a clear indication that the marriage has issues. Once again we are reminded that a marriage is a team, and thinking that one is not appreciated will lead to denigrating the team: “When one or both in a marriage start thinking like that I know the marriage is in serious trouble. Because then it isn’t about a team with different positions on that team with each taking responsibility for their own position and appreciating the other’s work” (p. 60).

The benefits of viewing marriage as a team are extolled by many of Schlessinger’s listeners: “Knowing no matter what happens in life, she will always be there by your side. We tackle life as a team—rather than alone” (p.102). Having a spouse who can help through the bad times and share in good memories is one of the top positive attributes of a marriage, according to Schlessinger.

Even Schlessinger’s radio advice given regarding money issues comes down to working as a team. “Remember that having your spouse know that you are joined as a team, struggling together, reaping the rewards together is, for you, a wonderful blessing” (p. 149). Schlessinger teaches that money should be looked at as something both spouses work on jointly. It should never represent who is most important in the relationship.

According to Schlessinger, when a marriage becomes rough or resentment sets in, spouses need to remember the positive aspects about the marriage. “You are a team. Stop thinking only that you are sleeping with the enemy” (p. 182). She advises that instead of telling one’s spouse what her or his faults are, one should tell the other what is positive and appreciated about them. She expects this approach will remind the other that the two are a team and thus, it will set a positive tone for the marriage. Schlessinger believes this

will increase motivation for the spouse to treat the other person better.

Linda, a Dr. Laura Show listener, wrote in that she had stopped working as a team with her husband on the finances. Her husband's income had dropped due to less cash coming into his business. He had become distant, cranky, and worried about the finances. Linda became resentful at the distance and began spending money behind his back, accumulating a hefty credit card debt. She did not want to talk to him because he was so distant and occupied by his business. After listening to the Dr. Laura Show she knew she had to come clean with her husband:

I paid bills, took a deep breath, and went to him with the numbers, statements, and credit card. I updated him on the bills, apologized for spending and not telling him. Told him I had been wrong and a BRAT, and turned my credit card over to him. Dr. Laura, I was stunned by his response! With tears in his eyes, he took my hand, kissed me, and then he TALKED—for an hour. He told me he felt useless for anything but writing checks now that the kids are grown—and since he couldn't even write checks with the money so low, he felt even worse. With college, a wedding, and all the other expenses with three great kids left to educate, he's worrying about retirement. And he misses the kids so much he can hardly stand it. So we made a plan to hike more, visit the grandchildren, and make whoopee! —all free activities. I assured him that I am very good at not spending money, and would run all purchases by him. We are closer than we have been in months. (pp. 196-197)

This example shows Schlessinger's belief that being focused on oneself and internalizing resentment and frustration can bring a marriage down. Working as a team, however, can purportedly bring happiness and joy at overcoming obstacles. A feeling of being "one" can evidently create a sense of unity that will keep a marriage in good stead.

Themes from *The Seven Principles For Making Marriage Work*

Four strong themes were found in Gottman’s book. Each theme will be presented with its subthemes unpacked. Below is a complete table of themes from the text.

Table 2. Themes from *The Seven Principles For Making Marriage Work*

Themes from <i>The Seven Principles For Making Marriage Work</i>
Friendship is the most important aspect of marriage
Conflict Happens
Repair attempt
Accept the one you love
Knowing your spouse equals a happy marriage
Love map
Dreams and goals
Developing family culture
We-ness
Relational culture

Friendship Is the Most Important Aspect of Marriage

The primary theme that runs through Gottman’s book is the idea that a marriage lasts and will be happy through friendship. “At the heart of my program is the simple truth that happy marriages are based on a deep friendship. By this I mean a mutual respect for and enjoyment of each other’s company” (p. 19). Friendship is intended to be the foundation of love in a marriage.

Gottman contends that couples who try to create a happy marriage by taking romantic vacations and giving anniversary gifts will find their marriage lacking if a strong friendship is not present. “Friendship fuels the flames of romance because it offers the best protection against feeling adversarial toward your spouse” (p. 20). Having this quality can prevent negative thoughts and feelings from overtaking the marriage. Therefore, it takes a bigger conflict to knock a marriage off balance than it would if a strong friendship was not present.

Although many marriages may begin with a high level of positive regard for each other, over time friendship may begin to take a back seat to other concerns. As the friendship begins to diminish, negativity will become detrimental and take longer to recover from. Words and actions in which the spouse engages become interpreted as intentionally disregarding the other spouse's feelings. Attempting to reignite a friendship can prevent marriages from dissolving. However, Gottman is clear that "rediscovering or reinvigorating friendship doesn't prevent couples from arguing. Instead, it gives them a secret weapon that prevents quarrels from getting out of hand" (p. 22).

Part of having a strong friendship is nurturing fondness and admiration in one's spouse, according to Gottman. Continuing to build good memories about each other to weather the rough spots in the relationship is crucial. If these feelings have disappeared, the marriage will be in dire straits. "Without the fundamental belief that your spouse is worthy of honor and respect, where is the basis for any kind of rewarding relationship (p. 65). Being active and continually contributing to positive feelings is necessary to keep and maintain a happy marriage.

Maintaining/rebuilding a friendship in a marriage may include a "stress reducing conversation" (p. 87). Gottman suggests meeting up at the end of the day to talk about how the day went for each spouse. He suggests that this can help manage stress that is not part of the marriage and keep that stress from spilling over into the marriage. If marital partners can help each other cope with outside stress, this can help keep their marriage strong. Even more important, Gottman recommends that one be on the spouse's side when he or she talks about issues at work or with a friend who is bothering one's partner. Additionally, identifying how one can help the spouse can greatly benefit a marriage.

If you have this sort of conversation every day, it can't help but benefit your marriage. You'll come away with the conviction that your partner is on your side, and that's one of the foundations of a long lasting friendship. (p. 92)

When couples treat each other as partners in decision making it is a sign of respect, and helps to keep the marital friendship vibrant and healthy. In a long-term study of 130 couples Gottman found “ even in the first few months of marriage, men who allow their wives to influence them have happier marriages and are less likely to divorce than men who resist their wives' influence” (p. 100). Gottman is quick to point out that women are more likely to accept influence, taking their partners' opinions into consideration, so not accepting influence is primarily a male issue.

Husbands may perceive accepting their wife's influence as giving up their own personal power. Men who try to keep control of their marriage often will use religious doctrine as a reason not to accept their wife's opinion in making a decision. Gottman argues that regardless of whether it is an egalitarian marriage or a traditional marriage where the man is considered head of the family, accepting one's wife's influence does not indicate a loss of power, but a show of respect. Dana Keher, LDS bishop, explains why accepting his wife's influence is important. Gottman describes a conversation he had with Mr. Keher:

Traditional Mormon doctrine exalts patriarchy. It holds that the husband should make all decisions for the family; Keher says he sees no conflict between his beliefs and accepting influence from his wife. He told me, ‘I wouldn't think about making a decision she disagreed with. That would be very disrespectful. We talk about it till we both agree, and *then* make the decision.’ (p. 101)

Gottman argues that marriages are found to be much happier when a husband accepts his wife's influence. Also, couples may be able to resolve problems in a manner that is acceptable to both. Without the ability to listen and accept influence, there isn't

much of a chance for compromise. Once again, this concept of accepting spousal influence comes back to having a strong friendship. “Perhaps most importantly, when a husband accepts his wife’s influence, his open attitude also heightens the *positive* in his relationship by strengthening his friendship with his wife” (p. 106).

Conflict Happens

Early in his book, Gottman points out that “no one style is necessarily better than the other—*as long as the style works for both people*” (p. 15). Having a happy marriage entails discussing all conflicts, but most importantly conflict styles should complement each other. Trouble can brew if one wants to talk all the time, while the other does not. Conflict styles must be compatible in order to have a happy marriage, Gottman argues.

Even if conflict styles are similar, conflict are not guaranteed to be resolved. Surprisingly, Gottman says “*most marital arguments cannot be solved*” (p. 22). This is because most arguments come down to a difference of “. . . lifestyle, personality, or values” (p. 22). Instead of trying to resolve the conflict, Gottman suggests couples must understand what that deep seated issue is and learn how to live with that difference. By doing this, couples can prevent resentment from creeping into their marriage.

With the reoccurrence of disagreements, Gottman emphasizes the importance of keeping such conflicts in their place and preventing them from exploding. He suggests couples who have stayed together and are happy keep perpetual disagreement in its place by having a sense of humor about it. As an example, Gottman writes:

Melinda and Andy have an ongoing conflict over his reluctance to go on outings with her family. But when they talk to me about this problem, they don’t get angry, they simply relate good naturedly what happens. Andy starts to tell me what he always ends up saying. Melinda, who knows it so well, jumps in and offers up his

quote for him, mimicking his put upon voice; ‘All right, I’ll go.’ Then Andy adds that he also says ‘Okay, sure, anything you say, dear.’ ‘We still continue to do that,’ Melinda explains to me. Then Andy chuckles and adds, ‘We don’t even disagree good, do we?’ Melinda and Andy haven’t solved their problem, but they’ve learned to live with it and approach it with good humor. (p. 131)

Having a sense of humor about the issue allows a couple to keep the problem from overwhelming their marriage. Another strength Gottman encourages that helps couples is that they understand their problems are a part of marriage and develop coping skills to be able to address them.

Repair Attempt

One of the primary ways that conflicts can be prevented from consuming the participants is by using the “*repair attempt*.” “This name refers to any statement or action—silly or otherwise—that prevents negativity from escalating out of control” (p. 22). Another way Gottman suggests to think of the repair attempt is to look at it as a brake for tense situations. Couples whose marriages are not shrouded in negativity are far more receptive to repair attempts than marriages that are. Using repair attempts can leave spouses open to finding a compromise or solution to their disagreements.

Gottman points out that in successful marriages, partners are not even aware that they may be using repair attempts when they are in the midst of a conflict. A repair attempt could be as simple as saying “I’m sorry” or sticking out one’s tongue in the middle of an argument. The repair attempt allows the tension to lessen or even dissipate between couples. Even more important than sending the repair attempt is the other person acknowledging it by being open to receiving the attempt and allowing it to deescalate tension. In unsuccessful marriages, repair attempts are often missed, allowing the tension to rise and become unbearable.

Repair attempts are important because a lack of them is a good indication that a couple will divorce. Gottman claims the ability to be able to predict if a couple will divorce with 82 percent accuracy: “. . . when you add in the failure of repair attempts, the accuracy rate reaches into the 90s” (p. 40). Regardless of detrimental acts, if spouses have successful repair attempts, their marriage will be happy and stable. Furthermore, Gottman insists, it doesn't matter what form the repair attempt takes; it is dependent on the state of the marriage.

If a marriage is embroiled in a constant negative state, repair attempts can be difficult to understand. “Because repair attempts can be difficult to hear if your relationship is engulfed in negativity, the best strategy is to make your attempts obviously formal in order to emphasize them” (p. 176). Gottman suggests either using scripted phrases or hand gestures to get the point across. This way antagonistic behavior can be slowed down and each person can recognize when she or he needs to step back and take a break from the discussion.

Accept the One You Love.

Since many arguments are recurring, and what couples found endearing about each other may start irritating them, it is essential that partners still have respect for each other. Part of overcoming conflicts and disagreements in a marriage is how couples feel about each other. According to Gottman:

Fondness and admiration are two of the most crucial elements in a rewarding and long-lasting romance. Although happily married couples may feel driven to distraction at times by their partner's personality flaws, they still feel that the person they married is worthy of honor and respect. (p. 63)

Spouses who can keep this in mind have happier and more stable marriages than partners who lose that sense of respect for their partner. Remembering those feelings or

rediscovering them if a marriage goes off track is the key.

Conflict resolution techniques or advice will not work if the other person does not feel loved and accepted for who they are, according to Gottman. His primary advice is:

The basis for coping effectively with either kind of problem is the same: communicating basic acceptance of your partner's personality. Human nature dictates that it is virtually impossible to accept advice from someone unless you feel that person understands you. (p. 149)

If asking somebody to change results in that person feeling judged, rejected, or unloved, odds are he or she will feel attacked and will not change whatever habit has been requested. In Gottman's perspective, having a partner who feels loved and respected is more apt to result in resolution of an issue than being judgmental or critical would.

Regardless of the issue, Gottman writes, "you don't have to agree with everything your spouse says or believes, but you have to be honestly open to *considering* his or her position" (p. 187). Sometimes a compromise is the only solution that can be found in marital problems; therefore one has to be open to a spouse's ideas. If spouses do not examine what is reasonable in their partner's argument, a solution will never become apparent. Compromise requires negotiation and for that to occur Gottman insists each spouse must be able to understand the other's spouse's point of view.

Knowing Your Spouse Equals a Happy Marriage

Love Map

Gottman's *love map* is a detailed understanding of each spouse's world. "From knowledge springs not only love, but the fortitude to weather storms. Couples who have detailed maps of each other's world are far better prepared to cope with stressful events and conflicts" (pp. 48-49). Husbands and wives who have an understanding of what each other's lives are about are less shocked when their marriage goes off course. This is

because they are in touch with what their spouses are feeling and thinking so they can recognize when their spouse is upset.

Gottman describes this love map in practice with Maggie and Ken:

They were in touch not just with the outlines of each other's lives—their favorite hobbies, sports, and so on—but with each other's deepest longings, beliefs, and fears. No matter how busy they were, they made each other their priority—always making sure they had time to catch up on each other's day. And at least once a week they would go out for dinner and just talk—sometimes about politics, sometimes about the weather, sometimes about their own marriage.

When their daughter was born, Maggie decided to give up her job as a computer scientist to stay home with the baby. ... Now she wanted the savings they had earmarked for a motorboat to go into a college fund. ... At first Ken was confused by the changes in his wife. The woman he thought he knew was transforming before his eyes. But because they were in the habit of staying deeply connected, Ken was able to keep up to date on what Maggie was thinking and feeling. ... As a result they went through the transformation to parenthood together, without losing sight of each other or their marriage. (p. 49)

Gottman concludes that Ken staying connected to his spouse, was able to keep abreast of the changes that were occurring and did not feel left out of the new phase in their marriage. Spouses who keep a detailed map of each other have a better chance of overcoming major transformations, as well as the passing of time.

Knowing and understanding a spouse's world is not something that stops. It is an ongoing process that will continue to enrich a marriage. According to Gottman, "One therapist I know has taken to wearing a Bugs Bunny pin and advising couples that the key to sustaining a happy marriage is to ask periodically, 'What's up doc?'" (p. 60). As couples keep up to date on each other's love maps they can use them to build admiration and respect for each other.

Dreams and Goals

Dreams and goals are regarded by Gottman as one important way to know and understand a spouse. Gottman addresses emotionally intelligent couples who help each other realize their dreams or goals:

In happy marriages partners incorporate each other's goals into their concept of what their marriage is about. These goals can be as concrete as wanting to live in a certain kind of house or to get a certain academic degree. But they can also be intangible, such as wanting to feel safe or wanting to view life as a grand adventure. (p. 220)

Gottman continues, "in a happy marriage neither spouse insists or attempts to manipulate the other into giving up their dream" (p. 220). He demonstrates how each partner's understanding of each other's goals and dreams is extremely important for a marriage to remain happy and stable.

Couples must first understand each partner's dream, according to Gottman. Secondly, the dream must be supported financially. Finally, Gottman recommends that each partner allow him/herself to become a part of the dream. "Acknowledging and respecting each other's deepest, most personal hopes and dreams is the key to saving and enriching your marriage" (p. 234). The most important thing spouses can do for dreams is to honor them.

Gottman additionally addresses goals as a separate concept from dreams. He defines dreams as "hopes, aspirations, and wishes that are a part of your identity and give purpose and meaning to your life" (p. 218). He gives the following examples of goals:

While we all have some very practical goals—like earning a certain income—we also have deeper, more spiritual goals. For one person the goal may be to find peace and healing after a tumultuous, abusive childhood. For another it may be to raise children who are good hearted, and generous. (p. 256)

It would seem that a goal is the active aspect of a dream. For example, I may dream of

security and my goal may be to have huge quantities of money. Spouses may not even know what their goals are in life and have to search deep within to figure it out.

Understanding one's own goal and being able to discuss goals with one's spouse can add a level of closeness to marriage:

Not only will you increase intimacy of your marriage by sharing your deepest goals with your spouse, but to the extent that you work together to achieve shared goals, they can be a path toward making your union even richer. (p. 256)

Gottman recommends that once goals are addressed and understood. The next step should be to work together to make them come true. Being able to work together to bring goals to fruition can create a strong partnership.

Developing Family Culture

Gottman's final theme looks at creating a family culture and the importance of developing it. This theme is broken into two sections: *We-ness* and cultivating a family culture. By creating a sense of *we-ness*, and then nurturing family culture, a marriage can grow stronger and have a deeper sense of meaning.

We-ness

Gottman details that part of what can make a marriage strong is when the couple can "express a 'we against other' attitude" (p. 89). Having both partners being supportive in times of difficulty creates a strong feeling of trust. Later, Gottman labels the sense of connection a couple feels to each other, "establishing a sense of 'we-ness,' or solidarity between husband and wife" (p. 189). This *we-ness* becomes evident when spouses put each other first, take each other's concerns and ideas into mind, and tackle problems together.

Often children can provide a new challenge to a marriage if a sense of togetherness

is not in place when the child is born. Changes occur when children enter the picture and the husband may begin to feel like an outsider. “While the wife is embracing a new sense of ‘we-ness’ that includes their child, the husband may still be pining for the old ‘us’” (p. 212). If a strong sense of togetherness is in place, Gottman shows that father can follow mother and child into a ‘we-ness’ that now incorporates baby as well.

As the new pressures of having a baby are felt, couples also have to deal with feeling guilty that their marriage is no longer their number one priority. This can have added stress on spouses. Having children does not mean a marriage has to suffer if both spouses have an understanding of each other. Gottman addresses couples who receive advice to spend time away from the baby and to talk about anything other than their child.

But baby and family are not diametrically opposed. Rather they are of one cloth. Yes, the couple should spend time away from the baby occasionally. But if they are making this transition well together, they will find they can’t stop talking about the baby; nor do they want to. (p. 213)

Gottman advises that couples should find time alone together but that doesn’t mean they should be prohibited from talking about their baby. In fact, it is a way of making sure both spouses are of like mind.

Relational Culture

Creating shared meaning can strengthen and deepen a marriage, urges Gottman. It is part of what brings two individual identities together and creates a family. Marriage is much more than the tasks families complete on a daily basis.

Marriage isn’t just about raising kids, splitting chores, and making love. It can also have a spiritual dimension that has to do with creating an inner life together—a culture rich with symbols and rituals, and appreciation for your roles and goals that link you, that lead you to understand what it means to be a part of the family you have become. (pp. 243-244)

Gottman points out that a culture can develop between “two people who have agreed to share their lives. In essence, each couple and each family creates its own microculture” (p. 244). Each person brings in one’s own ideas and thoughts into the family the couple has created. This allows the marriage to blend concepts and create new meaning for the family.

Gottman shows how culture also develops through the symbols families recognize and share together. “Another sign of shared meaning in a marriage is that your lives are surrounded by things that represent the values and beliefs you share” (p. 257). These objects can be a piece of furniture that a husband and wife scrimp and save for, and can be a reminder of how they can work together. Religious icons can also serve as a reminder of the faith two people share. Any object that has significant meaning to the family is a part of their culture.

Not all symbols are concrete objects, reminds Gottman. “Some symbols are abstract but no less significant to a marriage. Family stories, for example, can be symbolic of a whole set of values in that sense” (p. 257). Stories can remind couples of what is important in their family. Gottman uses the story of Helen and her husband Kevin to illustrate this point:

Helen’s story about her great-grandparents who kept their love alive even when separated by an ocean symbolized the family’s deep sense of loyalty . . . Her husband Kevin’s story of his great-grandmother’s generosity toward the poor was also a metaphor for another deeply held family value—that money is not as important as being connected to your community. (p. 257)

Each story illustrates values that both people bring into their marriage and family.

The Presence of Relational Dialectics

The Proper Care and Feeding of a Marriage

When Schlessinger is confronted with dialectical tensions, she fails to demonstrate sensitivity to them. She is prescriptive. The examples of marital issues are based primarily on emails and telephone calls to her show. Furthermore, the telephone calls she uses as examples also contain her comments, not allowing for a full development of the issue. Any source of conflict is viewed as disruptive to a marriage. In the end if a couple has issues they must learn to accept and deal with each other's problems. Lori, a listener to the show, wrote in regarding staying with her husband primarily for the children:

I know we are doing the right thing for our children. Once they're raised, I'll look at our relationship closer and see if we can extend our commitment to stay true to our vows. He still has issues that he doesn't address, but I have accepted them for now. (p. 158)

Schlessinger makes the point, “. . . when you know the other person's core drive, main issue, biggest need—don't fight it or criticize it . . . work with it” (p. 159).

Having only one side of the conflict to analyze makes it extremely difficult to understand if relational dialectics are indeed present. Furthermore, Schlessinger does not allow the full description of the situation to unfold before jumping in. For example, Dawn called in to find out how she could help her husband:

Dawn: We both feel that it's very important for me to be a stay-at-home mom.

However, my husband's job has become just an absolute nightmare for him. He's working full-time and he goes to school full-time. He's trying to get done with school in two months. His job is just a nightmare for him; however, he makes enough money for me to stay home with our baby.

Dr. L: Well, Craig, that's what a **man** does. I'm proud of you! A **man** doesn't say.

‘I’m not going to take care of my woman and my kid because I hate my job.’ A **man** says, ‘I hate my job, but hell, I’m taking care of my woman and my kid!’

You, Craig are a **real man!**

Craig laughs.

Dr. L: No, seriously, there aren’t a lot of real men around. There are a lot of males, but you are a real man.

Craig: Thanks

Dr. L: And the way you support that, Dawn, is to point out to him that he’s a real man, and your hero. He is putting up with crap as a man would, to protect and provide for his family. I respect and admire that. I hope you have some sons so he can raise them to be real men too.

Dawn: I agree.

Dr.L: That’s the answer to your question Dawn. You put your arms around his neck and say, ‘You’re a real man . . .and you’re mine!’ Craig, does that truly cover it?

Craig (excitedly): That will do it!

People call in to Schlessinger’s show looking for advice. However, unidimensional, role-based answers do not allow for an understanding of the dialectic that is present.

Another example is from a woman who explained that her husband complained because he didn’t think he had enough of her attention. The wife did not believe that was accurate, and had two small children she had to care for. Schlessinger explained how reasonable the husband’s request was and ended the call in this manner:

Caller: Well, I need time for myself.

Dr. L: If you refuse to acknowledge his loving need for you, then—if he’s a decent man—when your youngest is eighteen, he’ll be gone—and you’ll have lots of time for yourself.

In Schlessinger’s opinion, “This relationship was going to hell’ (p. 171). And she failed to address the presence of the dependence-autonomy dialectic.

The Seven Principles of Making Marriage Work

Gottman does not acknowledge dialectics directly, but he also does not accept them at face value of words used by clients and research participants. There are a number of ways conflict plays out and he recognizes that different conflicts can have different driving forces. Relational dialectics become most obvious in the sections of Gottman’s book that deal with conflict. One example is a conflict between Charlie and Belle as they discuss Belle wishing they didn’t have children:

Charlie: You think you would have been better off if I had backed you in not having children?

Belle: Having children was such an insult to me, Charlie.

Charlie: No, Hold on a minute.

Belle: I wanted so much to share a life with you. Instead I ended up a drudge.

Charlie: Now wait a minute, hold on. I don’t think not having children is that simple. I think that there’s a lot biologically that you’re ignoring.

Belle: Look at all the wonderful marriages that have been childless.

Charlie: Who?

Belle: The Duke and Duchess of Windsor!

Charlie: Please!

Belle: He was the king! He married a valuable woman. They had a very happy marriage.

Charlie: I don't think that's a fair example. First of all, she was forty. That makes a difference.

Belle: She never had any children. And he fell in love with her not because she was going to reproduce.

Charlie: But the fact is, Belle, that there is a real strong biological urge to have children.

Belle: That's an insult to think that I'm regulated by biology.

Charlie: I can't help it!

Belle: Well, anyway, I think we would have had a ball without children.

Charlie: Well, I think we had a ball with the kids, too.

Belle: I didn't have that much of a ball.

The argumentative style may appear contentious for a married couple; however when probed further, Belle admits she wanted to spend more time with Charlie (p. 12). This is a good representation of the dialectic autonomy vs. connection because Belle craves connection to Charlie, but the children keep pulling her away into an autonomous sphere. Dialectics do not equal a bad marriage.

Furthermore, Gottman does advocate that when a perpetual issue occurs creating tension, the goal is not to resolve it but to have open dialogue. He states, “. . . one day you will be able to talk about it without hurting each other. You will learn to live with the problem” (p. 217). Gottman's suggestions are based in verbal communication, such as “Describe what is happening. Don't judge, be clear, be polite, don't store things up” (p.

165).

Another example Gottman uses is Carmen and Bill. Carmen likes the home to be neat and tidy. She is extremely disciplined in keeping the house clean and orderly. Bill on the other hand can be messy and forgetful. For instance, when Carmen finds the telephone bill under a two-foot pile of newspapers in their recycling bin, she'll make her point by gently teasing him—unless she is feeling excessive stress that day, in which case she will throw a fit (p. 131). Gottman states, “. . . They are constantly working it out, for the most part good naturedly. At times it gets better, other times it gets worse. But they keep acknowledging the problem and talking about it, their love for each other isn't overwhelmed by their difference” (p. 131).

Gottman understands that regardless of what kind of problems spouses may come across, once they can identify and define various disagreements or tensions, they can customize the coping strategies. Having tension does not automatically equal an unsatisfying marriage. Couples who do have issues and learn different coping strategies strengthen that element of their marriage.

One final example of a couple who uses humor to combat their tensions is Melinda and Andy. They have an ongoing conflict over his reluctance to go on outings with her family. But when they talk about the problem, they do not get angry; they simply relate good-naturedly what happens. Andy starts to tell the story and Melinda, who knows it all so well, jumps in and offers up his quote for him, mimicking his put-upon voice: “All right, I'll go.” Then Andy adds that he also says “Okay, sure, anything you say dear” (p. 130). Andy and Melinda have not figured out how to resolve their problem but approach it in a humorous way, thus allowing for dialectical tensions to reside in the couple's

socially constructed relational culture. Gottman's dialectical treatment of Andy and Melinda's conflict does not offer a prescriptive answer. Rather, it allows for a multi-faceted approach to these natural relational tensions.

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

Themes

The purpose of this study was to consider through thematic analysis how self help books frame marriage. This study fills in the gap of academic literature by presenting an understanding of the themes contained in self-help books. It furthermore extends an understanding of how, through a social constructionist lens, individuals might take the self-help book themes and apply them to their marriages. Furthermore, the themes can filter down into different sources of media making them a powerful source of change. Below, themes from both books are presented side-by-side and presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Themes combined

THEMES COMBINED	
<i>The Proper Care and Feeding of Marriage</i>	<i>The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work</i>
Feminism is destructive to marriage	Friendship is the most important aspect of marriage
Contrary to feminism real women put their family first	Conflict Happens
Men and women have different traits	Repair attempt
Accepting masculine and feminism traits ensures a happy marriage	Accept the one you love
Women need to support their husbands	Knowing your spouse equals a happy marriage
Family of Origin	Love maps
A marriage is about each other	Dreams and Goals
	Developing family culture
	We-ness
	Relational culture

Both books represent an ideal vision of wedlock, although each author suggests a different method of achieving marital bliss (i.e., through the themes they espouse). The authors have widely diverging perspectives on understanding marriage, and each presents advice toward the end result of a happy marriage. It is difficult at best to pinpoint a theme that runs through both books. This speaks to the different ideals or themes of how a happy marriage can be achieved.

When themes are compared it becomes apparent that Schlessinger's solutions are primarily geared toward women. She spends a large portion of her book dispelling feminism, telling the reader that a real woman stays home and takes care of the home and children while a real man goes out and earns the money. Disaster will occur if either partner does not accept and maintain his or her role.

Such advice is based on a time-bound ideal that never truly existed unless one was white and upper-middle class (Coontz, 2005). Schlessinger does not take into account different factors that can determine the practicality of one spouse staying home. For example, according to the Employment Situation Report (2009), as of September 10.3 % of men have lost their jobs compared to 7.8 percent of women. Furthermore according to The Shriver Report (Shriver, 2009), four in five families with children at home lack the traditional male as the primary income earner. In fact, women currently are the main breadwinners or co-breadwinner. With changing roles comes the need for advice geared appropriately toward spouses.

Relational damage can occur due to an oversimplification of marital issues. For example, Schlessinger claims that drug and alcohol use represent purely selfish acts. She suggests that the only step required for a spouse to stop these addictions is the realization

these are self-centered activities that can be replaced by other pastimes. Yet drug and alcohol addiction are complex issues that require some form of treatment.

Schlessinger's advice to housewives who are depressed is to remember it is their moral obligation to be happy (p. 65). Mental illness requires a multi-faceted treatment approach. She makes no acknowledgement of seeking help outside of the marriage, such as counseling or therapy.

Finally, Schlessinger sends two different messages on helping spouses cope with rape or sexual abuse. Wives are supposed to realize their husbands alone did not commit the atrocity, and must learn to leave the indiscretion behind to become a fully functioning sexual being. However, if the husband has been sexually abused, Schlessinger urges the wife to understand and learn to work around his abuse. This message is confusing to both spouses.

Gottman, in contrast, does not attempt to clarify marital roles or attempt to reduce marital happiness into having spouses accept static roles. Whether a marriage is traditional or not, his suggestions can be implemented and practiced. Schlessinger identifies feminism as the primary reason that marriages fail, because women no longer accept their role as primary nurturer in the partnership. Gottman understands that women are working outside of the household and it is a box that cannot have the lid put back on (p. 110). As a result women do not want to come home and work a second shift, and women truly desire a partnership of equals. The key is not accepting a designated role, but attempting to find a deeper, more meaningful relationship beyond stereotypical gender roles. His ideas on how to create a stronger marriage apply to both spouses. These are skills both partners can use to create a stronger union.

Gottman identifies friendship as the most important element in a happy marriage. Having knowledge of each other and accepting influence from one's partner are essential in an egalitarian relationship. While Schlessinger would not argue with the importance of friendship in a marriage, she also would not present this relational component as more important than accepting the role distinctions as emphasized in her book.

The primary forces that construct Schlessinger's themes are her vehement dislike of feminism and accepting sex roles. Although she does use academic studies in the beginning of her book, her themes are primarily driven by religious doctrine. Terms such as God-given and God's contribution are used liberally through her text to support her argument for accepting sex roles. This will appeal to a segment of the population and deserved to have the themes of her book explicated in order to understand what messages are used to construct the concept of marriage.

In direct contrast, Gottman's themes are based on an egalitarian relationship between marital partners. He stresses friendship, understanding each person's goals and dreams, as well as accepting influence from one's spouse. His concepts of honor and respect are applicable to any marriage regardless if both spouses choose to work outside of the home or if one partner stays home to attend to the domestic duties. While Schlessinger grounds her advice in religious rhetoric, Gottman developed his advice from the academic institution, primarily from research he has conducted. This is an important difference between the two. Just as Schlessinger's book will appeal to a certain audience so will certain couples focused on Gottman's advice.

From a social constructionist standpoint, it is clear that individuals consuming either author's messages have decisions to make regarding advice to take. Schlessinger,

who takes a role perspective, offers ideas on a “good marriage” based on whether and to what degree men and women are aligned with their sex roles. Gottman, while not explicitly disputing roles as the primary criterion by which individuals construct marriage, takes a different viewpoint as he weaves themes of friendship, understanding dreams and goals, and development of family culture throughout his best-selling book.

The argument made here is not that the consumers reading either self-help book are “shot” with the silver bullet of the texts’ messages. Knowing the basic ideologies permeating best-selling, much-read books, however, provides greater knowledge of how readers frame or regard their messages. It is important what underlies the messages of best-selling authors in their advice books.

This demonstrates there are at least two ways of illustrating ideas and principles found in self-help books on marriage. First, Schlessinger uses examples from her radio show and emails, primarily anecdotal. Stories are presented to support her conclusions; however, there is a lack of scientific rigor in her expressed convictions. The general reader lacks the resources to comb through Schlessinger’s logs or emails to find out if her conclusions are truly accurate or picked specifically to support her ideas. Although she does refer to some academic research to justify her claims, those studies reside primarily at the beginning and end of her book. The remainder of the book rests on her opinion, anecdotes and ideas.

In contrast, Gottman supports his claims with primary research. He cites his own empirical work as well as other academic articles. The dialogue he uses to support his ideas are taken from social science research. He takes the time to explain how he reached

his conclusions. Furthermore, Gottman's own research is available for the public to peruse and determine its value.

Both authors use studies to support their claims. Schlessinger uses secondary research to back up her points while Gottman uses his own primary research as well as other studies. Although Gottman credits research he uses, Schlessinger relies on dates and university names as she informally cites research. However, neither book contains any form of a bibliography or reference list, making it a difficult process to locate the articles if a reader chooses to follow up.

Relational dialectics

The academic community and substantial scholarly research document the usefulness of relational dialectics as a way to understand and navigate relational culture (see, for example, Hoppe-Nagao & Ting-Toomey, 2002 and Sarnoff & Sarnoff, 1989). More specifically, when individuals are experiencing conflict or problems in their relationship, taking the lens of relational dialectics and oppositional tensions provides an objective way of gaining clarity on otherwise muddy, emotionally difficult situations. Relational dialectics furthermore provides a tool to analyze conflict on a deeper level than what appears to actually create relational tension.

Unfortunately Schlessinger's lack of understanding of relational dialectics results in advice for couples to repress and treat needs and concerns as unimportant. Dialectics not only illustrates the tension that exists in relationships but also urges dialogue in understanding and negotiating those issues. Rarely do they ever completely vanish in a relationship. If couples do not feel able to voice those issues it can lead to resentment and create larger problems.

Schlessinger is confronted with dialectic challenges throughout her book, as noted previously in the results section. A poignant example is the women calling in because she was upset that her husband wanted her to lose weight (p. 124). This tension is an example of novelty versus predictability. Schlessinger conveys her advice by using the justification of what a women's role is as a wife.

Based on Schlessinger's role perspective, dialectic tensions are treated as resolvable through taking on traditional sex roles and the behaviors those roles imply. For example, if a women is upset that her husband is seeking novelty in the form of an affair (the novelty-sameness dialectic), Schlessinger might encourage the woman to be "more of a woman" so that her husband feels less tempted to stray. A dialectic perspective would illustrate the importance of both parties understanding the natural and common novelty and sameness tension, and therefore their need to work on managing that tension together. Dialogue in negotiating those issues is paramount from a relational dialectic stance.

Gottman, while never using the phrase "relational dialectics," demonstrates an understanding of the complexities underlying marital conflicts and tensions. By understanding how to deal with conflict, couples do not become overwhelmed and can maintain a satisfied marriage (p. 130). Gottman recognizes that not all dialectics can use the same strategies, and gives multiple ways of dealing with those issues. He illustrates different techniques by understanding the different problems that can occur.

Gottman acknowledges that dialectic tensions exist and couples need to be able to work and negotiate around those issues. He also recognizes that there will be ongoing issues in a marriage and refers to those conflicts as perpetual. He recognizes that not all

dialectics can use the same strategies, and gives multiple ways of dealing with those issues. He understands that different problems require different techniques.

Limitations

Limitations of this study include the small sample of books chosen. Additionally, Gottman and Schlessinger carry credentials based on different training and professional experiences. Their contrasting approaches to marriage make it difficult to generalize thematic results. As a result, it was virtually impossible to find a unified theme running through both books, thereby providing little information regarding common categories for more than these two marital self-help books. Future research should focus on using a larger sample in order to understand if marital self-help text authors maintain any form of common, central themes.

This study focused on heterosexual marriage. As same-sex marriage becomes more widely legalized, it would be advantageous for family and marriage counselors to understand books that primarily deal with those unions in order to recommend texts for individual or couples' bibliotherapy.

Next, this study only had the primary researcher as the coder. Future research should have multiple coders to ensure the reliability of the data. Although some of the same themes may be picked up between coders, it is not hard to imagine that another with a different lens may find additional themes or interpret the themes differently.

Implications for Future Research

These results represent a first step for consumers and professional counselors to understand what messages marital self-help books are putting forth. Having this understanding can assist counselors' support, or counteract messages they do not support

from self-help books on marriage. This study can also help promote discussion in bibliotherapy suggested to clients.

Another study that can grow out of this research is examining self-help books on marriage from a historical context and comparing current texts in order to understand how popular texts on marriage have shifted perception. In order to understand marriage in its current context it is beneficial to understand where the institution has come from, as well as understand what concepts of marriage are filtering over from an earlier period.

This study took social constructionist and relational dialectical perspectives in discerning, through thematic analysis, the major ideas espoused in two best-selling marriage self-help books. The language and ideas used in the authors' objectification of marital scenarios are offered to readers in order to interpret their own experiences. Themes employed in this literature may be primary data used not only in possible marital reconstruction but also in bibliotherapy. While this thematic analysis provides no prescriptive information regarding which themes are wrong or right, its reliance on the theoretical frameworks of social constructionism and relational dialectics provides insight with which to assess the validity or usefulness of information contained in some of the best-selling marriage self-help books of the current times.

REFERENCES

- Amazon sales rank. (n.d.). In *Dog ear publishing official site*. Retrieved June 25, 2009, from <http://www.dogearpublishing.net>.
- Bach, G. R. (1970). *The intimate enemy: How to fight fair in love and marriage*. New York: Avon Books.
- Baxter, L.A. (1990). Dialectical contradictions in relationship development. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 7, 69-88.
- Baxter, L. A., & Braithwaite, D. O. (2008). Relational dialectical theory: Crafting meaning from competing discourses. In L.A. Baxter & D.O. Braithwaite (eds.), *Engaging theories in interpersonal communication* (pp. 349-361). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Baxter, L. A., & Montgomery, B. M. (1996). *Relating: Dialogues and dialectics*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Bayly, L. (1649). *The practice of piety*. Orlando, FL: Soli Deo Gloria Ministries.
- Berger, P., & Kellner, H. (1985). Marriage and the construction of reality. In G. Handel (ed.), *The psychosocial interior of the family* (pp. 3-19). New York: Aldine Company.
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *Social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Bernard, H. R., & Ryan, G.W. (2003). Techniques to identify themes. *Field Methods*, 15, 85-109.

- Biddulph, S. (1995). *Manhood*. London: Vermilion. Bly, R. (1990). *Iron John: A book about men*. New York: Perseus Books.
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information thematic analysis and code development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Braun, V., & Clark, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.
- Brown, S.L., & Booth, A., (1996). Cohabitation versus marriage: A comparison of relationships quality. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 58, 668-678.
- Cameron, D. (2007). Applied linguistics and the perils of popularity. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 17, 392-395.
- Campbell, L. F., & Smith, T. P. (2003). Integrating self-help books into psychotherapy. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 59, 177-186.
- Carnegie, D. (1994). *How to win friends & influence people*. New York: Pocket.
- Chesser, M.D. (1947). *Love without fear*. New York: Signet.
- Coontz, S., (2005). *Marriage, a history*. New York: Penguin Books
- Craighead, L. W., McNamara, K., & Horan, J. J. (1984). Perspectives on self-help and bibliotherapy: You are what you read. In S.D. Brown & R.W. Lent (Eds.), *Handbook on Counseling Psychology* (pp. 878-879). New York: Wiley.
- Employment situation summary. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2 Oct. 2009. Retrieved 15 Oct. 2009 from <<http://www.bls.gov>>.
- Flanagan, C. (2009, July 13). Why marriage matters. *Time*, 45-49.
- Foley, D. P. (2000). The moral and ethical judgments of Dr. Laura. *Journal of Religion*

and Health, 39, 39-42.

- Fonda, J. (1984). *Jane Fonda's workout book*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Franklin, B. (1757). *The way to wealth*. Norman: Boomerbooks.
- Friedan, B. (1963). *The feminine mystique*. Boston: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Gergen, K. J. (1985). The social constructionist movement in modern psychology. *American Psychologist, 40, 266-275.*
- Glasgow, R. E., & Rosen, G. M. (1978). Behavioral bibliotherapy: A review of self-help behavior therapy manuals. *Psychological Bulletin, 85, 1-23.*
- Golden, A.G., Kirby, E.L. , & McMillan J., (2006). An integrative perspective for organizational and family communication. In C. Beck (Ed) *Communication yearbook 30* (pp. 124-168). Mahway NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Gordon, M. (1969). The ideal husband as depicted in the 19th century marriage manual. *The Family Coordinator, 18, 226-231.*
- Gordon, M., & Bernstein, M. C. (1970). Mate choice and domestic life in the nineteenth-century marriage manual. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 32(4), 665-674.*
- Gottman, J. (1999) *The seven principles for making marriage work*. New York: Crown
- Gould, R. A., & Clum, G. A. (1993). A meta-analysis of self-help treatment approaches. *Clinical Psychology Review, 13, 169-186.*
- Gray, J. (1992). *Men are from Mars, women are from Venus: A practical guide for improving communication and getting what you want in your relationships*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Gray, J. (2008). *Why Mars and Venus collide: Improving relationships by understanding how men and women cope with stress differently*. New York: Harper Paperbacks.

- Hardy, S. (1673). *A Guide to heaven* (Vol. 8). Boston: Samuel Green.
- Hazlett-Stevens, H. (2005) *Women who worry too much: How to stop worry & anxiety from ruining relationships, work, & fun*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.
- Holland, J. (1989). *The Silicon Syndrome: How to survive a high-tech relationship*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Holland, J. (1983). *Silicon Syndrome: A survival handbook for couples*. Palo Alto, CA: Coast Light Press.
- Hoppe-Nagao, A., & Ting-Toomey, S. (2002). Relational dialectics and management strategies in marital couples. *The Southern Communication Journal*, 67, 142-158.
- Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15, 1277-1288.
- Jampolsky, G. G. (1979). *Love is letting go of fear*. Berkely, CA: Celestial Arts
- Katz, B., & Katz, L.S. (1985). *Self-help: 1400 best books on personal self growth*. New York: RR. Bowker.
- Kinsey, A.C. (1968). *Sexual behavior in the human female*. New York: Pocket.
- Kinsey, A. C. (1948). *Sexual behavior in the human male*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Kurtzweid, R. L., Scoggin, F., & Rosen, G. M. (1996). A test of fail-safe for self-help programs. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 23, 629-630.
- Laipson, P. (1996). Kiss without shame, for she desires it: Sexual foreplay in American marital advice literature. *Journal of Social History*, 29, 507-525.
- Malchow, C. W. (1905). *The sexual life*. St. Paul, MN: The Burton Company.

- Mars, R. W. (1995). A meta-analysis of bibliotherapy studies. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 23, 843-870.
- Mazel, J. (1984). *The Beverly Hills diet*. New York: Berkley.
- Messina, J. (1986). *Marriage workout: A marital enrichment workbook*. Tampa, FL: Advancement Development Systems.
- Montgomery, B. M., & Baxter, L. (1998). *Dialectical approaches to studying personal relationships*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Norcross, J. C., Santrock, J. W., Campbell R. L. F., Smith, T. P., Sommer, R., & Zuckerman, E. L. (2000). *Authoritative guide to self-help resources in mental health*. New York: Guilford Press.
- O'Neill, N., & O'Neill, G. (1973). *Open marriage: A new lifestyle for couples*. New York: Avon Books.
- Owen, W.F. (1984). Interpretive themes in relational communication, *Qualitative Journal of Speech*, 70, 270-274.
- Pearsall, P. (2005). *The last self-help book you'll ever need*. New York: Basic Books.
- Robie, W. F. (1920). *Sex and life: What the experienced should teach and what the inexperienced should learn*. Boston, MA: The Gorham Press.
- Rosen, G.M., Glasgow, R. E., & Moore, T. E. (2003). The science and business of giving psychology away. In G. M. Rosen, (Ed.), *Science and Pseudoscience in Clinical Psychology* (pp. 399-424). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Sampson, B. (2006, June 15). Navigating the Amazon sales ranking. from <http://www.webpronews.com/expertarticles/2006/06/15/navigating-the-amazon-sales-ranking>.

- Santrock, J. W., Minnett, A. M., & Campbell, B. D. (1994). *The authoritative guide to self-help books*. New York: The Guildford Press.
- Sarnoff, I., & Sarnoff, S. (1989) The dialectic of marriage. *Psychology Today*, *Psychology Today* 23, 55-57
- Schlessinger, L. (2007). *The proper care and feeding of marriage*. New York: Harper Paperbacks.
- Shriver, Maria. The Shriver Report: A Woman's Nation Changes Everything. A Study by Maria Shriver and the Center For American Progress. Retrieved 17 Oct. 2009. From <http://www.awomansnation.com>
- Shrunk, F. A., & Engels, D. W. (1981). Bibliotherapy as a counseling adjunct: Research findings. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 60, 143-147.
- Simmonds, W. (1992). *Women and self-help culture: Reading between the lines*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Simmons, R. (1982). *Richard Simmons: Never-say-diet book*. New York, NY: Grand Central.
- Singleton, A. (2004). Good advice for godly men: Oppressed men in Christian men's self-help literature. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 13, 163-164.
- Spock, B. (1955). *Dr. Spock's baby and childcare*. New York: Pocket Books
- Starker, S. (1989). *Oracle at the supermarket: The American preoccupation with self-help*. New York: Transaction.
- Steinberg, S. (1983). *Publisher's weekly yearbook*. New York: R.R. Bowker Company. *The Gottman Institute*. Retrieved June 24, 2009, from <http://www.gottman.com>
- Tesch, R. (1990) *Qualitative Research: Analysis Types and Software Tools*. The Falmer Press.

The Llewellyn Encyclopedia: Authors. (2009). In *Llewellyn Encyclopedia and Glossary*.

Retrieved June 24, 2009, from

http://www.llewellynencyclopedia.com/subjects.php?gen_sbj=Authors

The Top Talk Radio Audiences. (2008). In *Talkers Magazine*. Retrieved March 21, 2009.

Tully, G. (1968). *Don't be a wife - be a mistress*. New York: Belmont Press.

Waldron, V.R., & Kelley, D.L. (2009). *Marriage at midlife: Counseling strategies and analytical tools*. Warren: Springer Publishing Company.

Woodstock, L. (2007). Think about it: The misbegotten promise of positive thinking discourse. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 31, 166-189.

Woudstra, W. J. (2007). The problem with bestsellers. from

<http://publishingcentral.com/articles/20030407-4-f15c.html>

Zimmerman, T. S., Holm, K. E., & Haddock, S. (2001). A decade of advice for women and men in the best-selling self-help literature. *Family Relations*, 50, 122-133.