

LASTING AND FUNCTIONING MARRIAGES IN THE 1980'S

Benjamin Schlesinger
University of Toronto

ABSTRACT

This paper reviews published North American studies related to marital satisfaction, the influence of children on marital satisfaction, the effects of working wives on satisfaction, personality traits, companionship, communication, and power related to marital satisfaction. Following this a survey of existing studies related to lasting families is summarized.

The paper concludes with a study of 129 couples living in lasting marriages for at least 15 years with at least one child in the family in Metropolitan Toronto. This was a self-selected sample, who were middle class and lived in an urban area. The highlights of the findings are presented, and implications for family practitioners are listed.

It is fashionable in the 1980's to headline the growing rates of family breakdown, and we appear to forget that for many North Americans "lasting marriages" are still in style.

Review of the Literature — Marital Satisfaction

It should be pointed out at the outset of this review that there is a slight discrepancy between the focus of the present study which concerns "Lasting Marriages" and the focus of the bulk of the studies reviewed here which are concerned primarily with "Marital Satisfaction". While obviously there are many common characteristics between marriages that endure and those that are satisfying, it is also obvious that not all marriages that last are satisfying. On bal-

ance, however, it was felt that the available literature provided sufficient useful background material to be of aid in the development of the questionnaire utilized in this study.

Marital Satisfaction Over the Family Life Cycle

One of the most recurring themes in the literature on marital satisfaction is the theme of marital satisfaction over the family life cycle. Researchers have noted three different trends. These include a linear decline with the happiest stage being the honeymoon period and subsequent stages revealing a steady decline in marital satisfaction; a curvilinear trend where the empty-nest stage is the high point in the life cycle due to the increased independence and a U-shaped

curve with its peak in marital satisfaction in the initial years of marriage, declining with the birth of children and improving once the child have left the home.

Although numerous studies have been conducted in this area, the results have indicated no conclusive or consistent trend. The findings of specific researchers appear to be influenced by their methodology and orientations. Deutscher (1964) attempts to locate and describe the quality of post-parental life within two strata of the population, the upper and middle class.

Of the 49 individual spouses interviewed, 22 clearly indicated the post-parental period as being a better stage than previous stages and only three gave negative evaluations. Those who responded positively indicated that this stage was a time of freedom from financial responsibilities, housework and other chores, providing a greater possibility for self-expression and economic security.

Schram (1979) explored much of the current research conducted on the relationship between marital satisfaction and the family life cycle. She found the overall results of the research conducted in this area ambiguous, inconsistent and inconclusive.

She examined the methodology, and comments on some of its difficulties. These problems include such factors as an inconsistent definition of marital satisfaction, the use of individual response assuming that they apply to the dyad and so forth. Her research generally supports the position that marital satisfaction appears to increase in the post-parental period.

Gilford and Bengston (1979) utilize a 3-generational framework to explore marital satisfaction over the life-cycle. They found substantial differences among the three generations. The results supported a U-shaped curve and a linear decline depending on the dimensions explored.

Rollins & Feldman (1980) conducted a study on 700 couples confined to the middle and upper classes. Their study showed that for wives there was a steady decline in satisfaction from the beginning of marriage to

the "school-age" stage, a levelling off and then a rapid increase from the "empty-nest" to the "retired" stage. For husbands there was a slight decline until the "school-age" stage, a slight increase in the "empty-nest" stage and a rapid increase in the "retired" stage.

They concluded that generally husbands seemed to be less affected by the stage of family life than wives. These findings suggest that child-bearing and child-rearing have a negative effect on the marital satisfaction of wives.

Rollins and Cannon (1974) support a U-shaped trend in marital satisfaction in the family life cycle, with an increase in satisfaction in the post-parental period. They administered questionnaires to 1600 families, 800 being Mormon families. Despite this trend they felt that research has overplayed the influence of the family life cycle on marital satisfaction and that role theory may provide an explanation for the relationship between life cycle and marital satisfaction. For example, the more role functions a spouse assumes, the greater the chances of role strain.

Bossard and Ball (1955) found no significant variation in happiness over the life cycle for men or women. The researchers attempted to relate age and length of marriage to marital happiness and their findings proved inconclusive.

Burr (1973) investigated whether marital satisfaction varies over the life cycle. The researcher used six specific areas of marital adjustment including finances, social activity, household tasks, companionship, sexual interaction and relationship with children to examine marital satisfaction. The author found that the greater the number of roles a spouse has to play and the greater the number of tasks that must be performed, the more strain will be placed on a marriage.

Bernard (1972) mentions research on marital satisfaction over the family life cycle. She states that research indicates that there is a linear decline in marital satisfaction over the life-cycle.

The Influence of Children on Marital Satisfaction

A study conducted by Luckey and Bain (1970) explores the influence of children on marital satisfaction. Their research indicated that satisfied couples found their marriages enhanced by the companionship of each other, while couples who experienced little companionship relied on their children for satisfaction. Thus, if couples had a low degree of satisfaction in their marriages, their marriages may have stayed together primarily because of their children. Furthermore, the authors found that the number of children in a marriage did not influence marital satisfaction. Finally, these authors noted that for some couples, children were found to be the only source of satisfaction in their marriage.

Bartz (1978) also examined the influence of children on marital satisfaction, but her study focused on child rearing tasks and parenting. She found that successful families were those where both parents were involved with child rearing tasks and where there was consistent parental agreement.

Effects of Working Wives on Marital Satisfaction

The effects of working wives on marital satisfaction has become an important area of study over the past ten years, with the increased number of women entering the work force. Much of the research that has been conducted seems to refute the fallacy that working wives create stress in marriages.

Booth (1977, 1979) concluded two studies in which he focused on the husband's reaction for his wife's working outside of the home. In the first study he found that husbands of employed women evidenced no more signs of marital discord and stress than did spouses of housewives. He felt that husbands and wives were readily adjusting to female participation in the labour force and the benefits that couples derived from pursuing dual careers far outweighed the disadvantages.

In his second study, he found even stronger evidence in support of the fact that husbands did not experience negative stress when wives were working. Indeed, the findings revealed that husbands were happier when wives were working. His subjects also reported that the quality of family life may be enhanced by the fact that wives were working outside of the home.

Wright (1978) found that there were not strong or consistent differences in overall happiness or life satisfaction between working women and housewives. The data revealed that working women enjoyed the added income and independence, however, they lived a more hectic and complicated life.

An earlier study conducted by Orden and Bradburn (1967) differed somewhat with the previous studies. The authors found that there was a decrease in marital satisfaction in both spouses when the wife was working for purely monetary reasons. If the wife was working out of choice, rather than economic necessity, there was a slight tendency for husbands to report they were happier than husbands whose wives chose to stay home. The authors also found that the strain created by the fact that the wife was working by necessity, was greater for lower class couples. In this case, a lower income husband may have felt that he was not fulfilling his role in terms of his ability to provide for the economic needs of his family. Hence, he may have been more sensitive to disagreements in his marriage as an additional threat to an already shaken ego.

Personality Traits as They Relate to Marital Satisfaction

Initially, research in this area seemed to concern itself with isolating specific personality traits within the spouses in an effort to discover the interactional dynamics which led to marital satisfaction. Two patterns emerged from the data collected. The first type of relationship was based on similarity of personality traits within each spouse. The second type was based on complementary

personality traits, or as the common saying goes "opposites attract".

Pickford, Signori and Rempel (1966) concluded from their study that there was fairly consistent evidence indicating that marital happiness was related to similarity of personality traits, and that dissimilarity was related to unhappiness. Blazer (1963) discovered that similarity of need patterns and relative strengths lead to more marital satisfaction than if those characteristics were complementary. Levinger (1965) found that, rather than personality traits being the key issue, the degree to which the spouse viewed the traits as positive or negative was the crucial factor in marital satisfaction.

In a further attempt to examine personality traits and their relationship to marital success, researchers began to examine the intensity of the personality traits as well as the types. Pickford, Signori and Rempel (1966a) conducted a further study in this area, and concluded that the intensity of male personality traits appeared to play a more crucial role in determining marital success. Dean (1966), in examining the degree of emotional security in couples, found that, indeed, this trait was important in determining marital satisfaction. Luckey (1966) found that the intensity of specific personality traits played a crucial role in marital satisfaction. Her findings indicated a change over a period of time, however. The longer people were married, the less favorable were the personality traits seen in the spouse for both satisfied and dissatisfied couples.

Westley and Epstein (1960, 1970) conducted two studies in the area of personality factors with differ from other investigators in that they focused on the interactional dynamics of all family members in an effort to gain deeper understanding of this difficult phenomena. The 1960 study of nine families, each of whom contained at least one healthy adolescent revealed the following:

- 1) the parents of the subject were well adjusted to the marriages;

- 2) the final marital relationships were largely dependent upon the attitudes of the wives towards their husbands;
- 3) these attitudes seem to originate in the emotional dependence of the wives upon their fathers for gratification of dependency needs.

In their second study, Westley and Epstein (1970) found that a healthy personality would enable a person to have a healthy marriage. They felt that a healthy personality would evolve from a warm, loving environment where there was a clear division of tasks and responsibilities.

Companionship

A number of research studies such as Lederer and Jackson (1968) Hawkins (1968) and Luckey and Bain (1970) examined the place of companionship in contributing to marital satisfaction and all concurred that this variable was a significant and key ingredient. In fact, Luckey and Bain (1970) noted that dissatisfied couples, more often than not, had a low degree of companionship in their marriage.

Lederer and Jackson (1968) went so far as to say that companionship is more important than love, especially romantic love, and that the couples they studied used companionship as a key word to describe the nature of their marriages. Hawkins (1968) took issue with these conclusions and commented that while we cannot assume that love is the most essential factor contributing to marital satisfaction, neither can we assume that companionate interaction in and of itself is capable of assuming satisfaction. He found, further, that variables such as companionship, love and trust may be more crucial to a woman's satisfaction than to a man's.

Communication

Communication, both verbal and non-verbal, was explored in a number of studies by Bernard (1964) Levinger (1965) Navran (1967) Lederer and Jackson (1968) and Lobsenz and Blackburn (1969), to deter-

mine its relationship to marital satisfaction. While all the studies agreed that good communication positively correlated to the achievement of this end, each of the studies focused on slightly different issues around communication.

Bernard (1964) stated simply that communication was essential if one was to arrive at a satisfactory relationship but does not really define what she meant by this. Similarly, Lederer and Jackson (1968) comment on that communication is a key factor in a successful marriage.

Havran (1967) probed communication concept a little more deeply. He pointed out first, that good communication skills were useful tools in order to cope with the problems inherent in marriage since impaired communication was more essential than non-verbal although both were important. Lobsenz and Blackburn (1969) focused on a similar perspective. They noted that when decision making patterns were upset a disequilibrium occurred in the family. This affected the balance of power in the material relationship which, in turn, affected communication.

Levinger (1965) explored a slightly different issue that of the connection between communication and similarities in the couple in education and religion. His finding was that similarities in these areas enhanced communication.

Power and Marital Satisfaction

The issue of power in the marital dyad is a theme developed by Bernard (1972) in her analysis of marriages. In Bernard's analysis the focus was on the inequality of power in the marriage. The author examined role stereotyping in both sexes, and attributed the differences in marital adjustment to the inequality in male/female roles. Bernard claimed that the institutional structure of marriage has invested the husband with authority and backed it by the power of Church and State. As a result of the imbalance of power the effect that marriage had on men was very different than the effect on wom-

en. The husband's marriage was a very positive experience as evidenced by higher incomes, and lower suicide rates.

Bernard claimed that there were options for the future on terms of a marital arrangement where power was shared positively in the marriage. One such option was by the achievement of personhood in marriage through developing a relationship in which the partners would be equal in terms of pursuing both their own goals and mutual ones. One person would not submit to the other, at the expense of their own individuality.

Lobsenz and Blackburn (1969) concluded that the balance of power can shift with either positive or negative affects depending on the degree of security in "self" of the partners. It seems that both Bernard and Lobsenz and Blackburn stress the need to achieve "personhood" or develop self in order to be positively affected by power in the marriage and not feel threatened by its pressure.

Other Factors Relating to Marital Satisfaction

Westley and Epstein (1970) comment on social status and marital satisfaction. Their finding was that wives who marry in an upward fashion were more satisfied than women who married into a lower social status. Cuber and Marrott (1965) found that the upper class preferred to remain married even though some couples were dissatisfied with their marital relationships. Therefore it seems that while chances for marital satisfaction were greater if women married upwards there was still considerable chance of marital dissatisfaction in the upper class.

A number of points bear highlighting concerning both the methodology and the content of these various studies. These include:

Methodology

A number of limitations were noted in the methodology. For example, (1) there are few longitudinal studies compared to the number of cross-sectional studies; (2) the

samples used do not reflect the socio-economic and ethnic diversity of North American society; (3) most of the research utilized solely American samples; (4) inconsistent definition of concept, (i.e., love, power), often made it difficult to understand or evaluate the validity of the research.

Content

It was surprising to note that compared to the wealth of information that exist on marital break-up, relatively little information is available on marital satisfaction. One might query what this means — Does it illuminate an idiosyncratic bias of the researchers, or does it illuminate the reality of increased marital break-up in today's society?

Functioning Family Systems

Barnhill (1979) reviewed the concepts of the healthy family system. His eight basic dimensions of family mental health include, individuation; the independence of thought and feeling and judgement of individual family members; mutuality, a sense of emotional closeness; flexibility, the capacity to be adjustable and resilient; stability, consistency, responsibility and security in family interactions; clear perception, undistorted awareness of others; clear communication; role reciprocity; and clear general boundaries, that is specific differences between marital, parent-child, and sibling relationships.

Characteristics of Lasting Families

Stinnett (1979) developed six qualities of strong families. They are: appreciation for each other, spending time together, good communication patterns, commitment, a religious orientation, and an ability to deal with a crisis in a positive manner.

Gantman (1980) lists the following characteristics of healthy families. Her conclusions were based on a review of the existing literature. The author points out that the well-functioning family demonstrated high levels of efficiency in behavior and decision making. Healthy family members are sup-

portive, expressive, and communicate in noisy, discontinuous speech patterns. The power structure of the family is well defined with father as the most frequent leader. The generational boundaries are clear. Members demonstrate respect for each other's uniqueness. There is an adaptive mechanism to cope with disequilibrium without requiring a rigid hierarchy or return to a status quo.

Lasting Marriages

Ammons and Stinnett (1980) studied 72, rural, middle aged, middle class individuals married between 15-25 years. The four major aspects to a lasting marriage were, reciprocity, providing support for each other, determination and commitment, well developed ego strengths in that the individuals can take independent actions, and a satisfactory sexual life. Sprowsky and Houghston (1978) examined 40 couples who had been married on the average for 53 years. The wives felt that religion, love, a give and take, work at marriage and understanding and patience were important to a lasting union. The men added honesty and trust and a life commitment to these factors.

The Family Life Cycle and Lasting Families

Barcai (1981) feels that healthy, normal families pass through a sequentially developmental life cycle. He developed a family normative developmental model which includes the following stages.

- (1) *Couple Identity* — The need and desire to be a part of a couple is universal. It takes about one to two years for all the various processes that go into the creation of a couple as a separate system.
- (2) *The first child* — The couple system becomes a family system.
- (3) *The second child* — The children form a sibling subsystem so that the dyadic relationship of parent vis a vis the children is maintained.
- (4) *Going to school* — The transferring of responsibility and control over the child

from the family to society.

- (5) *Adolescence* — For the first and only time a member of the family appears to be both half in and half out of the family framework.
- (6) *Leaving the Nest* — It is essential that the family sees the leaver as a success.
- (7) *Family Lost, Couplehood Required* — Barcai states that one has to consider these stages in examining both lasting and dysfunctional families, and inquire how these families go through these developmental stages. Boss (1980), looks at normative stress over the family life cycle and adds the variables of Life Span Family boundary changes.

Boss (1980: 449) states:

"Stress continues in any family until membership can be clarified and the system reorganized regarding (a) who performs what roles and tasks, and (b) how family members perceive the absent member. Challenges to the family's capacity for boundary maintenance come not only from outside forces, but also from normal development maturation throughout the life cycle. Such challenges are met by families by varying their structure to maintain functions. Recognizing and investigating variability in structure for boundary maintenance offers one promising approach to study the original question of why some families can cope with every day life stresses whereas other cannot".

Living with lasting families

Hansen (1981: 73-74) lived with three lasting families. She spend seven fully days, including sleeping in their respective homes with each family. Among the 21 findings related to this experience the following stand out.

1. The more functional families appear to

have a smoother more relaxed rhythm.

2. It seems possible to have a "functional family" with the marital relationship given a lower priority than the parental and parent-child relationship.
3. It is important to have an overall pattern of addressing any serious problem in the family, and the sooner the better.
4. High spontaneous agreement seems important in the marital and parental relationship.
5. It appears to work for the mother to be in charge of bringing up the children, as long as the father is in general agreement with her ways, supports her, and withdraws from the arena when he differs.
6. In the most functional family, there is the least use of authoritarianism, threats of punishment, and punishment extending into other areas of the children's lives, although it was clear that the parents were in charge.
7. In the more functional families, there seems to be a "context for relief"; there are periods in the day, particularly after work and at dinner, when attention is given to relaxation and sharing of interests rather than to more productivity or criticism.
8. In the functional families, the parents seem to be genuinely interested in their children and have adequate time for them, which they show by maintaining attention to the point of completion about issues that involve their children.
9. In the more functional families, the parents seem to provide good models for the points they are trying to teach their children. In general, they "practice what they preach".
10. In functional families, the children seem to get along relatively well together and are helpful to one another.

These observations would add to our understanding of functioning families.

Sociological Insights

Lingeman (1981), revisited Middletown

(Muncie, Indiana) after the classic study by Robert and Helen Lynd in 1929, and "Middletown Revisited" in 1937. His review is based on a forthcoming book "Middletown Families: 50 Years of Change and Continuity" (University of Minnesota Press). Some of the findings relate to lasting families.

1. Family life in Muncie is more open, more cherished, more desirable than 50 years ago.
2. There is increased family solidarity, a smaller generation gap, closer marital communication, more religion and less mobility.
3. The families are optimistic about the future in terms of personal and family fulfillment.
4. Working or not, women remain at the center of the home.
5. The family is not isolated, each household is caught up in a web of kinship ties and non-family friendships.
6. The family in Middletown is a "composite family" whose members do not live under the same roof but one bound to see another by ties of love and duty.

It is possible that some of these findings are helpful to identify lasting families in other parts of America and Canada.

The Creative Family: A "Lasting" Component

Stafford and Donelson (1981: 25) describe the "creative" family.

1. The creative family member is independent yet needing support, free spirited yet needing structure and boundaries, reflective yet spontaneous and adventuresome, fluent yet withdrawn.
2. Creative people revel in the art of the impossible, the why-nots in life. They are curious, sensitive, imaginative, flexible, and innovative-people who enjoy new experiences and self-expression.
3. The creative family respects its members as unique individuals, offering supportive appreciation, providing encouraging new experiences. It does not demand

conformity and is not overly strict or domineering, yet structure in the lives of its members is fundamental, order is predominant.

4. The creative profile reflects a minimum of anxiety and a great deal of self-discipline. Over and above all, the family demonstrates an irrepressible inquiry of spirit, flexibility of thought, and a spontaneous joy in living.

This profile can be added to some of the other qualities related to lasting families in order to broaden the profile of these families.

A Canadian Study of Lasting Marriages

This study involved 129 couples in the Metropolitan Toronto area who were either interviewed (62 couples) or were mailed the two questionnaires (67 couples). Our couples were obtained by advertising in a Toronto newspaper, and all volunteered for this study. A lasting marriage was defined as one "which has lasted **at least** 15 years and contained **at least** one child". The two questionnaires were composed of a checklist, and a five questions/open-ended questionnaire. Husband and wives responded to the same two questionnaires separately. Our interviews were completed during the period of November 1980 - March 1981. The research team consisted of the author and nine social work students who were completing their Masters of Social Work degree at the Faculty of Social Work*.

The Couples — Background Data

The number of years married ranged from 15 to 43 years, with an average length of 25 years married. Our men and women ranged in age from 33 to 70 years. The average age was 48 years. The number of children in each family ranged from 1 to 9, with an average of 3 children. Forty-three percent were Protestant, 31% were Jewish, 18% Catholic, 2% were Other, and 6% reported no religion or did not answer the question. Seventy-two percent of the participants had had at least some university or post-secondary training, and only 12.9%

had had less than Grade 11. The largest group of people had graduated from university (37%). Most of the respondents (60%) were working full-time. The largest single category of occupation for women was "Not Working Outside the Home" (23%). All of the couples lived in the urban area of Metropolitan Toronto, Canada. This was a middle class sample. We divided the couples into three major age groups. We had 42 couples who were married 15 - 20 years; 45 couples who were married 21 - 26 years and 42 couples who were married 27 - 43 years.

Findings

Checklist: There were 19 items which were chosen by more than 83 percent of our respondents as "extremely important" in helping marriages to last. The first ten, in order of importance were: respect for each other, trusting each other, loyalty, loving each other, counting on each other, considering each other's needs, providing each other with emotional support, commitment to make marriage last, fidelity, give and take in marriage.

There were five items among the "extremely important" items where men and women differed in their responses by more than 15 percent. In other words, more women than men felt that the five items were "extremely important". The items were recognizing one's own needs, positive relationships with children, sharing feelings and emotions, similar goals in life and a sense of humour.

What did emerge from the checklist was a very high agreement among the men and women who checked the list separately about the factors which make a marriage last.

The Open-Ended Questions: The first question we asked our respondents was to indicate the most important factors in lasting marriages. Both men and women indicated the following four factors as the most important in a lasting marriage. Love, Respect, Trust, and Communication. The next five included Commitment, Loyalty, Hon-

esty, Friendship, and a Good Sexual Life (men only). Fidelity for both men and women ranked tenth in order of importance.

We also asked how our couples resolved conflict. Most of our couples used "discussion" with a combination of other methods such as "arguing", "shouting", and "expressing feelings openly". Only a small number (8 men) stated that conflict was not resolved. In other words, our couples used forms of "communication" to resolve their conflicts. It also did indicate that lasting marriages had conflicts.

We asked about satisfied and dissatisfied elements of a lasting marriage. For men the first five elements of a lasting marriage were in order of importance: friendship, companionship, shared interests and goals, building something together such as a family, love, and children. For the women in our study the five satisfying elements were: friendship, personal growth, a supportive partner, children, and a secure lifestyle.

It was of great interest that in 90 percent of our responses, both men and women indicated no dissatisfaction. For 10 percent of the men, the four unsatisfying elements in a lasting marriage were: not sexually satisfied, money problems, children too demanding, and constraints on their personal freedom. For ten percent of the women the unsatisfying aspects were: sexual relations, finances, the husband's workload, and children.

When asked our respondents about their expectations of their marriages at the beginning of their married life one quarter of the men and 55 percent of the women had traditional expectations. Thirty percent of the men and 23 percent of the women had shared responsibilities as their expectations. The responses shifted when queried about the present expectations of the lasting marriages. Only 7 percent of the men and 20 percent of the women had traditional expectations, while 43 percent of the men and 29 percent of the women indicated "shared responsibilities". However, 18 percent of the women indicated that "independence" was

part of their present expectations today.

The last open-ended question dealt with the advice to be given to couples intending to marry today by our lasting marriage group. The first most important items by the women (in order of importance) were communication, respect, commitment, work at your marriage, and financial security. The men in our study gave the following items: communication, work at your marriage, commitment, financial security, and sharing. The last three items of seventeen listed by our study group were trust, take a marital course, and consideration by the women, and understanding, trust and maturity by the men.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study include the nature of the non-random sample, it was a middle-class urban white group of persons, and it is possible that since we advertised we obtained volunteers whose marriages were satisfying ones. Our sample does not represent the religious, ethnic, or racial mix evident in the population of Metropolitan Toronto.

We did not have any control over the mailed responses, nor did we have a control group of "non-satisfied" lasting marriages.

Suggestions for Further Research

Arising out of our study it is suggested that further studies of lasting marriages in Canada are appropriate. These would include comparative studies of lasting marriages among urban-rural couples, ethnic variations, varied socio-economic groups, and long lasting marriages (30 years and over). A study of childless lasting marriages, and longitudinal study in which couples are followed in 5 year intervals after their marriages would give us added data on lasting marriages.

Implications for Family Practitioners

For the wide range of human service practitioners, the findings of this study

should make us aware that not all Canadian marriages are falling apart and require our services. The findings may also give us a balanced perspective from the types of families which seek help for their varied problems. The functioning families and couples also need support, and some are joining "Marriage Enrichment" seminars to rejuvenate their lasting relationships. We can also incorporate in our family life education courses the results of studies related to functioning families. Last but not least, we have to continue to examine the ingredients of lasting marriages, and to test them out with families who are finding their marriage in difficulty and want to find ways and means to continue their relationship, rather than break up their union to become a statistic related to Canadian marriage breakdown. It is time in the 1980's to call an interdisciplinary conference related to "The Strengths of Canadian Families", in order to examine those families who may form the silent majority in Canada.

Conclusions:

We have reviewed some recent studies related to functioning families and lasting marriages, as well as reported on a Canadian study of lasting marriages. It is possible that the 1980's have ushered in the decade of highlighting those families who survive and those marriages who last despite the varied pressures in North America. We may have underestimated this "silent majority" and it is only fair that we give them "equal time". Zimmerman (1980: 204) Comments on this phenomenon:

"The family may be faring far better than other social institutions in assessments of its performance, despite the dreary and depressing anomalies in which some families are involved and that consume so much of the public's attention: child abuse, spouse abuse, drug abuse, suicide, homicide, and so on. Yet, in thinking about

these anomalies, it is important to remember that they do not pertain to most families, and that most families, despite or because of changing structures and a frequently unfriend-

ly environment, are performing their functions and meeting the needs of their members and society apparently better than society is meeting the needs of families."

RESUME

Cet article fait la revue des études nord-américaines sur la satisfaction maritale, l'influence des enfants sur cette satisfaction, les effets du travail des épouses, les traits de personnalité, le compagnonage, la communication et le pouvoir en relation avec la satisfaction entre époux. On fait ensuite un survol des études sur les familles qui perdurent. L'article se termine par une étude faite dans le Toronto métropolitain auprès de 129 couples ayant au moins un enfant et dont le mariage dure depuis au moins 15 ans. L'échantillon autosélectionné provient de la classe moyenne et habite un milieu urbain. On présente les principaux résultats de cette étude et on fait la liste des implications pour les praticiens de la famille.

FOOTNOTES

- * The research group included: Sharon Dove, Janet Heinrichs, Pamela Kopstein, Nita Levine, Betty Lou Lynn, Elaine Solway, Judy Spiegle, Lauren Wainwright, and Sydney Woolcombe. Our Computer Consultant was Robert P. Mullaly, M.S.W. The research group all received their Masters Degree of Social Work in June 1981.

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