

**FEMINISTS AND MARRIAGE:
A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS**

By

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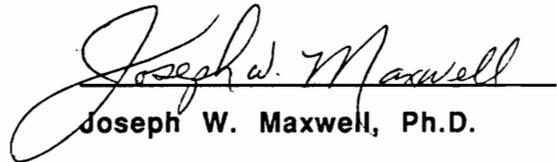


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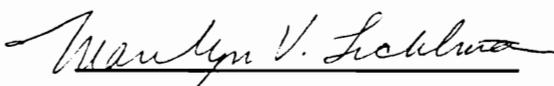
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ABSTRACT

Feminist critiques have demonstrated the problematic nature of marital and family life for women. Feminism has deconstructed traditional marriage and made apparent the potential overwhelming cost to women in financial, emotional, and physical dimensions. However, the experience of feminists who choose heterosexual marriage has not been addressed through research. What is not known is the extent to which such feminists are transforming marriage into a relationship that values both spouses.

This study examined the influence feminism had on the marriage of heterosexual partners who were both self-identified feminists at the time of the study and prior to marriage. The guiding focus of the research asked what happens when feminists, dedicated to equality and the valuing of both spouses, choose to marry. Thus, the following research questions were posed: How do couples describe the impact of their feminist beliefs on their marriages? To what extent do couples talk about having a double consciousness of marriage, i.e., a realization of choosing a relationship that can lead to the devaluation of the woman? How do couples describe and interpret equality and inequality in their marriages? How does gender organize the couples' marriages and lives?

The conceptual framework informing this study was a combination of feminist and general systems perspectives. A general systems perspective provided concepts such as system, process, and context while a feminist perspective elaborated on these concepts to illuminate the sociohistorical and cultural contexts in which women and men live and the power differentials within marriages. A feminist postmodern perspective highlighted the social construction of relationships and gender and the diversity of women's experience while also proposing a political agenda, i.e., criteria of what is liberating for women and a critique of the gendered nature of power differentials.

Qualitative interviewing was the main method of data collection. Participants were recruited through referrals and advertisements placed in regional newspapers and regional and state newsletters of the National Organization for Women. Ten couples participated in the study. Criteria for inclusion in the study included the following: both the woman and the man assumed the label feminist prior to marriage; they believed women had historically and culturally been devalued and they worked against that devaluation in their own relationship; they were married for at least 5 years; and they were willing to be interviewed jointly and individually. The 20 participants (10

couples) were white, highly educated, and middle- to upper middle-class. They ranged in age from 30 to 77 years old. Length of marriage ranged from 5 to 22 years; the average was 11 and 1/2 years.

A mixture of being raised by parents exhibiting behaviors typically associated with the other gender, the impact of the second wave of feminism as it hit college campuses in the late 1960s and 1970s, and the observation or direct experience of discrimination either in the classroom or in the workplace created a fertile soil in which the origins of feminist beliefs were encouraged to take root. Sharing similar world views was crucial in the couples' development of a relationship in which the woman felt safe to critique direct and observed instances of gender injustice. Men also initiated and participated in this criticism, thereby indicating their support of feminism.

The blend of traditional and feminist ideological roots produced a reclamation of marriage. Couples described feminism as influencing their beliefs about equality within marriage by providing standards for interaction and motivating women to demand appropriate treatment and men to demand more from themselves in terms of relationship work. They discussed the double consciousness of married heterosexual feminists by relating their strategies for interacting with one another and the larger society. Through the process of communication, the couples built equality, but at times, i.e. through discourse, they also concealed inequality. Participants' lives were organized by the gendered experiences of feminism as life-saving for women and life-enhancing for men.

Moments of subordination and moments of empowerment were present in these marriages. The women described their attempts at going beyond the false dichotomy of children or career and the stereotype of the super woman to a form of marriage that required a second adult in the home who was willing to take on parenting and household responsibilities. These attempts were easy for some couples and more of a struggle for others. However, in all of these marriages, evidence existed of women's and men's dedication to equality and choices for women, awareness of the privileged status of men in society, and arrangement of their relationships to benefit women as well as men. Feminism provided the ideological and practical guidance to couples for this reclamation of marriage.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Overview and Purpose of Study

Heterosexual married couples who were self-identified feminists and who were feminists at marriage were interviewed to determine the influence of feminist beliefs on their marriages. The successes of these women and men in creating marriages based on equality and the valuing of both spouses were explored, as well as any struggles or obstacles they encountered in their everyday experiences of marriage.

The research questions asked not what happens when women in traditional marriages join the Women's Movement, but what happens to marriage when feminists (women and men), dedicated to equality and the valuing of both spouses, choose to marry each other. In the former case, research has demonstrated that the individual women change a great deal but the men have little interest in changing their beliefs and behaviors. When this dilemma occurs women have chosen creative solutions: reducing the centrality of the marriage and increasing the reliance and value of friendship with other women; negotiating a sphere of one's own such as space in the house, a job or career, and leading separate lives; leaving the marriage; or for a few, creating equality within the marriage (Acker, Barry, & Esseveld, 1981). The present investigation went beyond studying women trying to create an equal marriage from a more traditional one to examining marriages of women and men who based their marriage on feminist beliefs.

Rationale for the Study

Feminist critiques of the past two decades have demonstrated the problematic nature of marital and family life for women (Glenn, 1987). Women are the partners in marriage responsible for its emotional intimacy, adapting their sexual desires to their husbands, monitoring the relationship and resolving conflict from a subordinate position, and being as independent as possible without threatening their husbands' status (Fishman, 1983; Thompson & Walker, 1989). Feminism has provided a critique of traditional marriage, resulting in an awareness of its overwhelming cost to women in financial, emotional, and physical dimensions (Ferree, 1990; Glenn, 1987). The problematic nature of marriage for women has been linked to its centrality in

patriarchy, its devaluation of women's work, and its organization of gendered experiences (Ferree, 1990; Glenn, 1987). Some scholars of the family who have examined marital happiness and unhappiness have concluded that marriage is a "poor situation" for women (Libby, 1977) and curtails personal growth of women (Coyner, 1977).

The oppressive conditions of traditional marriage are well known to feminists and family scholars who are familiar with feminist critiques of the family (Bernard, 1982; Ferree, 1990; Glenn, 1987; Thompson & Walker, 1989; Thorne, 1982). Although feminist critiques of marriage are numerous, few feminist research studies of marriage exist (see Acker et al., 1981). Feminist analyses have provided an excellent critique of relationships, yet feminists are just beginning to address possible nonoppressive relationships and the continued vitality of heterosexuality (Stacey, 1986). What is not addressed in the literature is the experience of feminists who choose heterosexual marriage as their primary relationship. What is not known is the extent to which such feminists are transforming marriage into a relationship that values both spouses. Women are not "passive targets of oppression" but are actively struggling for equality in marriage (Glenn, 1987, p. 367).

Gender is an important concept in the understanding of heterosexual marriages of feminists. Gender is defined as "personality traits and behavior patterns associated with the cultural constructs of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'" (Tong, 1989, p. 28). Yet Ferree (1990) noted the expansion of the definition to include process by stating that the recent "conceptualization of gender highlights the process of the social construction of maleness and femaleness as oppositional categories with unequal social value" (p. 868) and requires the ignoring and even suppression of similarities by "the constant and contentious process of en-gendering behavior as separate and unequal" (p. 869). Her definition makes available a critique of gender as a struggle against female subordination.

Feminism historically has critiqued the family as oppressive due to its gendered relations, but recently its supportive aspects for women have been noted, such as providing resources and self-esteem for minority and working class women (Ferree, 1990). To what degree spouses experienced gender as an organizing concept in their marriages was considered in the present study (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1990; Smith,

1987). Ferree (1990) suggested that waged work, housework, and control of income are three issues that "emerge as central for understanding the historically specific structural context in which families construct gender in their daily operations" (p. 871). Therefore, spouses were questioned about their views and experiences of women's and men's employment, provider roles, housework, income, and allocation of money.

The women and men in these relationships described how they built and sustained marriages based on feminist beliefs. The everyday experiences of women and men as they worked together for equality in their relationships are highlighted in order to provide ideas for other couples who are trying to form such a marriage and for therapists who are assisting couples to develop relationships that promote the growth of both partners.

Definition of Concepts

For the purpose of this present study, *feminist* is defined as a person who: identifies herself or himself as a feminist; recognizes the potential inequality and devaluation of women in personal relationships and in society; and seeks equality and the valuing of women and men, particularly on a personal level in heterosexual marriage (Stanley, 1990). Some men believe that feminist refers only to women, the Latin being "having the qualities of females" (Tuttle, 1986, p. 107), but will use the term *profeminist* to refer to themselves (Taggart, 1985). Kimmel (1988, 1992) suggested that men can believe in feminism but only women, who have felt and experienced the oppression, are feminists. "But to *be* a feminist, I believe, requires another ingredient: the felt experience of oppression. And this men cannot feel because men are not oppressed but privileged by sexism" (Kimmel, 1992, p. 3, emphasis in original). In this case, *profeminist* retains the observation of inequality between women and men and the belief that this inequality is wrong and needs to be changed (Kimmel, 1992).

Double consciousness has been used to refer to an awareness feminists have of the devaluation of women in society and personal relationships while participating in such systems and attempting to challenge and resist such devaluation (Du Bois, 1983; Collins, 1990; Walker, Martin, & Thompson, 1988; Westcott, 1979). The idea arises from feminist standpoint theory which notes the enhanced sensitivity of the less powerful to the dominant view and to their own devalued position (Annas, 1978). In

this study, *double consciousness* refers to an awareness spouses have of marriage as a relationship potentially oppressive to women while still choosing to be married and attempting to create and sustain equality and the valuing of both spouses within their marriage. One research goal was to explore the extent to which spouses described a double consciousness of a feminist in a heterosexual marriage, i.e., the awareness of choosing a relationship that on the surface appears to be contrary to feminist beliefs.

Valuing refers to rating highly the worth of something, and for this study specifically the importance of a person (i.e., from the Latin, *valere* to be worth, be strong). *Devaluing* or *devaluation* refers to lessening the worth or importance of a person (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1981).

The concepts of feminist and double consciousness were used in this study as sensitizing concepts rather than operational definitions permanently fixed throughout the study (Denzin, 1989a). The above definition of a feminist was used to screen volunteers for the study in order to offer some consistency across participants. However, one goal of the study was to determine how couples who subscribed to the above definition of feminist described equality/inequality and valuing/devaluing of women and men within their own marriages. Thus, feminist and double consciousness were organizing or guiding concepts in examining the marriages of self-identified feminists, yet their definitions were open to expansion to better reflect their meanings in the everyday lives of those studied.

Heterosexual is used to describe the type of relationship studied, not the sexual orientation of the participants. The term patriarchy is used to refer to "the systematic subordination of women" (Tong, 1989, p. 72) in which society is structured to advance men's power and status over women and often at the expense of the latter. This advancement takes place through oppression of women, or the overt and covert ways women are subordinated and devalued in society and in personal relationships (Chafetz, 1990). Oppression requires structural relationships between groups (Kimmel, 1992) which feminist theorists believe takes place through the social construction of gender (Ferree, 1990). Gender justice is another term for sexual equality, the goal of women's liberation (Tong, 1989). Feminists have delineated types of power. Power-over is one person controlling another, is based on competition, and leads to disconnection from others. Power-to emphasizes the capacity of a person to care for self and others, is

based on disclosure, and leads to connection with others. Power-over connotes domination whereas power-to connotes freedom (Goodrich, 1991; Tong, 1989).

Research Questions

Walker et al. (1988) called feminist family program practitioners to analyze how feminists were working within the academy. This call was adapted for the present study in order to focus the investigation on feminists who are in marriages and to reveal how they are:

struggling with translating their values into practice [of marriage]. We need literature in all its complexity and contradictory detail on developing and implementing feminist [marriage]. We need to hear about their everyday personal experience in trying to apply feminist principles to [marriage]--how they work within a system; how they resist, circumvent, change, a system; how they experience double vision/consciousness as feminists [who are married] (Walker et al., 1988, p. 21).

The following research questions were proposed to reflect this call to examine the heterosexual marriages of feminists.

How do couples describe the impact of their feminist beliefs on their marriages? This question inquired into the everyday experiences and processes couples have in creating and maintaining a marriage based on feminist principles. They were asked to describe ways in which they have blended successfully feminism and marriage as well as to provide examples of how they have not been successful. If they indicated experiencing obstacles to implementing a marriage based on their feminist beliefs, they were asked to locate sources of these obstacles. Potential obstacles could be experienced as a struggle between the spouses or located outside the relationship in the interactions with others such as family members, co-workers, peer groups, and friends.

To what extent do couples talk about having a double consciousness of marriage? This question considered if and how couples described an awareness of choosing a relationship that has the potential to devalue women while trying to ensure the devaluation did not occur. Couples were asked if they considered marriage and feminism to be contrary to one another. If so, they were asked how they were able to hold on to both, that is, being married and being a feminist. If not, they were asked how they combined the two.

How do couples describe and interpret equality/inequality and valuing/devaluing in their marriages? This question sought to explain how couples understand interactions and beliefs that encourage equality or inequality.

How does gender organize the couples' marriages and lives? This question explored the spouses' employment experiences, their views of provider and homemaker roles, division of housework and child care (if they had children), and financial matters. Spouses were asked in what ways interacting as a male and a female has influenced their experiences of marriage.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

Introduction

In this chapter the conceptual framework for the study is explained. General systems theory provides the concepts that are examined from a feminist perspective in order to understand and explain the experiences of heterosexual feminists who marry. After a brief description of the conceptual framework, major principles of a feminist perspective are reviewed and then concepts from general systems theory selected for the study will be explained and situated within a feminist perspective. The literature reviewed below comes from a variety of sources although mainly from family therapy, family studies, sociology, and a feminist critique of the social sciences.

Conceptual Framework

The heterosexual marriages of feminists were analyzed through the use of selected concepts from general systems thinking (Weinberg, 1975) as used by family therapists (Duhl, 1983) and examined from a feminist perspective (Acker, Barry, & Esseveld, 1983; Du Bois, 1983; Nielsen, 1990). A general systems perspective is important to the study of marriage because it provides the concepts to enable the focus of the analysis to be on a relationship. A general systems perspective offers concepts such as system, process, and context that may provide a way of viewing families which emphasizes patterns of interaction within and outside the family (Constantine, 1989). Feminist family therapists have critiqued the practical application of these theoretical concepts and concluded that these concepts have not been used fully to illuminate the sociohistorical and cultural contexts in which women and men live and the power differentials within families (Goldner, 1985; James & McIntyre, 1983; Taggart, 1985). These concepts were broadened by examining them through the lens of a feminist perspective in order to study the marriages of heterosexual feminists who are living within a particular culture and society at a particular time of history. A goal of this study was to go beyond the problematic nature of marriage for women, a necessary and valuable step in a feminist critique of marriage, to describing and explaining marriage based on feminist beliefs of equality and valuation.

A Feminist Perspective

Although feminists offer a variety of viewpoints on many issues, they share some basic principles, or assumptions, of feminism (Walker et al., 1988). Foremost is the belief that women have been and continue to be denied equal access to jobs, status, power, and money because of their gender (Acker et al., 1983; Walters, Carter, Papp, & Silverstein, 1988). Recent theorizing on gender has discarded sex role theory for a gender perspective that "highlights the process of the social construction of maleness and femaleness as oppositional categories with unequal social value" (Ferree, 1990, p. 868). Summing up Smith's (1987) ideas in *The Everyday World as Problematic*, Ferree (1990) stated, "the gender perspective simultaneously emphasizes the symbolic and the structural, the ideological and the material, the interactional and the institutional levels of analysis" (p. 868). These dialectical analyses were considered in the present study by asking about the meanings of marriage and gender that were consciously chosen by the women and men in a marital relationship, the ideal expectations of marriage and material divisions of labor, and the experience of marriage as a relationship between two persons and as participation in a historical institution.

Secondly, feminists believe that the personal is political, that is: the social devaluation of women is played out in women's personal lives; the stories of women's lives have worth; and the telling of women's stories promotes change (Walker et al., 1988). Thus, a feminist perspective of marriage advocates a respect for all people's experiences, especially those previously silenced, while analyzing how knowledge is socially constructed (Keller, 1985). Analyzing how the personal is political moved the analysis away from particularizing couple's experiences to providing an understanding of how the larger social structure influenced their lives (Acker et al., 1983), thus emphasizing how relationships are socially constructed (Nielsen 1990). This understanding was generated by noting common patterns, or themes, among couples as they interacted with others and dealt with expectations, laws, and procedures of the larger social structure in their everyday world (Smith, 1987).

Finally, feminists have a double consciousness of reality. Feminists are part of a social system that devalues women. At times they receive the benefits of being in such a system (e.g., professional or academic jobs, upper income, privileged class), yet they also challenge the system and work for the visibility of women. This concept of double

consciousness refers to the potential tension, contradictions, and struggle women and men face when trying to create an equal relationship within a larger context of devaluation of women.

A General Systems Perspective

Ludwig von Bertalanffy is given credit for the origination of "general systems theory" (Duhl, 1983) or the "general systems approach" to thinking (Weinberg, 1975). Broderick and Smith (1979) concluded their review of the general systems perspective by stating that this approach is a conceptual perspective highlighting crucial issues, rather than a theory, a set of interrelated propositions. For the purposes of the present study, general systems theory was considered a conceptual framework, a perspective for viewing the world. As a perspective, general systems theory offered concepts that framed the proposed exploration of marriage and focused the analysis on the relationship level.

Marital system. Von Bertalanffy (1968) defined living systems, one form of possible systems, as a complex of components in dynamic interaction. "Dynamic interaction" means that "active components *inform, impact on, or exchange with each other*" (Duhl, 1983, p. 55, emphasis in original). The system considered in this study is the marital system. Weinberg (1975) stated that "*a system is a way of looking at the world*" (p. 52, emphasis in original). The choice of labeling something "a system" reveals what the person, or group who labels, finds important. Marriage as a substantive area has a grand legacy within family therapy and family studies (Bernard, 1982; Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Berger & Kellner, 1985; Cuber & Harroff, 1965; Marks, 1986).

The Composition and Decomposition Laws discussed in general systems thinking address the dialectic of focusing simultaneously on various levels of systems: the individual, the relational, and the contextual (Weinberg, 1975). While the use of these general systems laws did not result in specific predictions about complex systems such as marriage, it provided assistance in steering clear of making the "grand fallacy" of an exact prediction (Weinberg, 1975).

The Composition Law, "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts," directs

attention to the marriage as a whole that is greater than just adding together the two spouses. "[I]ndividual behavior does not exist in a vacuum, nor is it created only in the inner mind of the individual. Rather, individual human behavior exists in relationships of dynamic interaction with others" (Duhl, 1983, p. ix). Thus, one goal was to develop with the women and men in the study an understanding of the context in which they lived, what influenced the choices they made about how to interact, and how their lives were congruent and/or incongruent with their feminist beliefs and values. It was assumed that couples might find important in their lives some of the following influences: their families of origin and procreation, friends, community, workplaces, social and political organizations, cultural milieu, social expectations, and state and federal laws.

The Decomposition Law, "the part is more than a fraction of the whole," directs attention to the individual partner as a concern of study. "In the systems theoretic world view, a person is not only more than merely a part, role, or actor in a family system; a person is more than all the parts they play in all the various contexts and systems in which they participate in life" (Constantine, 1989, p. 112).

Recently, Marks (1986) demonstrated the conceptual strength of general systems thinking by keeping both the individual and the marital system in focus at the same time. In Marks's model, each partner in a marriage is represented by a triangle that has three points of reference. The first is the inner self, i.e., the internal thoughts, feelings, and reactions of the individual. The second corner is the primary partnership of any intimate relationship, in Marks's case (1986), a spouse and the accounting of the spouse's needs and actions. The third corner represents other important foci such as children, career, interests, and spirituality. It is the continual attention given to and movement between the three points that highlights how partners interact within their system of marriage. Although Marks's (1986) model of the self and the system was not used in the present study, the need to acknowledge the various levels of systems informed the analysis (see Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986; Case & Robinson, 1990; Duhl, 1983; Nichols, 1987).

A feminist perspective enriches the concept of marital systems by providing a consideration of gender when examining levels of systems. A general systems perspective considers parts of a system to be interchangeable (Broderick & Smith, 1979), but this assumption does not allow for the differences in power experienced by

the spouses due to gender within the marital system and within suprasystems, or larger contexts. A feminist perspective becomes crucial to the understanding of how couples try to create a marriage based on equality and the valuing of women within a larger context in which women often face inequality.

Thus, the analysis was an ongoing consideration of what Duhl (1983, p. xiii) called "a triple-decker view of three levels of systems," of the individual, the couple, and the larger context which couples believe affects their marriage. The analysis focused on marriage as the unit of analysis, but as informed by the experiences of spouses and contained within a particular context that often values men and women differently.

Process. Broderick and Smith (1979) proposed that the very heart of systems theory is the transformation of input from the environment (any stimulus from the environment entering a system is called input) to the output (the system's response back to the environment). This transformation is a process by which the family responds according to its rules and metarules which are prescriptions for responses. General systems theory is well-known for its focus on process versus content of interactions (Walters et al., 1988). The processes in which the partners engaged that indicated to themselves and others the status of their relationships being developed on feminist principles were vital to understanding the influence of feminism on their marriages.

The present analysis was informed by the concept of power which traditionally has been ignored or its existence denied by systems writers in the field of family therapy and research, beginning with Bateson (1979) (see Constantine, 1989; Fish, 1990). MacKinnon and Miller (1987) proposed that the dismissal of power is perhaps the easiest way to "provoke feminist criticism" (p. 144). Feminists perceive the seemingly nonchalant dismissal of power as denying the existence of inequality in relationships. Duhl (1983) suggested that von Bertalanffy's definition of living systems, components in dynamic interaction, holds an implicit idea of the reciprocity of impact. The concepts of circularity, recursiveness, and reciprocity seem to imply "that participants are not only mutually, but *equally*, involved in maintaining the interaction" (MacKinnon & Miller, 1987, p. 144, emphasis in the original). Taggart (1985) asserted that the idea of mutually interacting participants can easily lead to blaming the victim. A feminist

perspective elaborates the concept of process to include an awareness of the members in the system and that their interaction cannot be assumed to be based on equality of resources, status, power, or money but that such information is crucial to understanding the meanings of the interactions of heterosexual spouses (Acker et al., 1983; Walters et al., 1988).

A feminist perspective maintains that content is also as important as process, a consideration that tends to become lost in general systems thinking as done by family therapists (Walters et al., 1988). Therefore, for example, how decisions were made and the topic of those decisions were both considered important for the present study. Also, possibly crucial to the understanding of the influence of feminism on marriage was any description of a double consciousness, of a potential struggle with the creation of a marriage based on feminist beliefs.

Context. Although general systems perspective allows for the consideration of context, actual focus on the context of families has been uneven in the family therapy literature (Constantine, 1989). The general systems approach allows for the consideration of complex arrangements and interactions within a defined boundary. This process of delineating the parts of a system from the elements of the environment, however, does not exclude the interactions of subsystems and suprasystems with the system (Constantine, 1989). This systems analysis provides a way to consider children, extended family, neighbors, friends, work, and social, economic, and political factors as important to the understanding and explanations of marriages of feminists. "Context is always implied" in general systems theory (Duhl, 1983), although not always considered by practitioners and researchers, as the feminist critique of family therapy has pointed out (Luepnitz, 1988; Taggart, 1985; Walters et al., 1988)

Recently, a number of feminist scholars have criticized the application of a general systems perspective for its deficiencies about what it conceptually does not highlight about the family. Erickson (1989) and Luepnitz (1988) dismiss a systemic perspective as being a very small map for a very large territory. Goldner (1985) argued that it inadequately explains the family because it ignores gender as an organizing principle of marital and family life, and limits context to the immediate family and present time. Constantine (1989) offered a rebuttal to such criticisms, stating that the

general systems perspective does include context, consideration of the individual, and acknowledgement of subjective observation. Constantine (1989) argued that "the overarching framework of general systems theory" (p. 111) is often misunderstood and thus limited in its scope and applicability to understanding family life.

Recent critiques responded both to theoretical and practical applications of general systems theory. In response to Constantine's (1989) rebuttal, Erickson (1989) decreed that he is interested in

what is *excluded* from view, with what is *screened out* by the systemic lens, and why this might be so. Try, if you will, to find references to the following in the systemic literature: social class, values, gender issues, power and powerlessness, social conditions, social justice, child poverty, homelessness....these are some of the matters of social context rendered quite dim when seeing with the systemic lens; and no person constructs social conditions (pp. 124-125, emphasis in original).

Although the consideration of suprasystems, or context, is available conceptually through the general systems perspective, the implications of socially constructed relationships being mirrored in couples has not been highlighted until a feminist critique of systems theory as used by some family therapists. In the practical application of both general systems theory, context can become lost. Considering family problems to originate from faulty meaning systems particularizes family members' experiences rather than connecting them to a wider sociohistorical and cultural contexts. A thorough analysis of marriage would include understanding the current milieu and its requirement of certain behavior patterns of couples, patterns that can all too easily then be called dysfunctional (James & McIntyre, 1983) or decreed deviant and therefore not applicable to the majority.

The feminist belief that knowledge is socially constructed takes into account the context in which knowledge is developed. Taggart (1985) asserted that a person's reality of life is not "personal property" that is created "*ex nihilo* in which prior constraints (of language, history, social structure, epistemology, etc.) are mysteriously done away with" (p. 118-119, emphasis in original). A tension exists between the competing concepts of relativism and objective reality. Weinberg (1975) suggested that a general systems perspective addresses this dialectic:

Thus there is an attempt not to fall into relativism, where all reality is within a person's mind, while also attempting to acknowledge that an objective reality is unable to be known. While what we observe depends on our characteristics as observers, it does not depend *entirely* on those characteristics. There are two extreme views on this subject--the 'realist' and the 'solipsist.' The 'solipsist' imagines that there is no reality outside of his own head, while the 'realist' flatters himself that what is in his head is all real. Both suffer from the same disease (p. 99, emphasis in original).

A Feminist Postmodern Perspective

The feminist perspective used in this study reflects this dialectical tension noted by Taggart (1985) and in Weinberg's (1975) understanding of general systems thinking and carries the dialectical synthesis beyond the either/or view, or a compromise view (McBride, 1976), to a "transcendent third" synthesis by including an emancipatory element in which feminist work "identifies obstacles....[and] remov[es] the structural features and barriers that distort or limit open, free dialogue," which is a requirement for holding a dialectical synthesis to knowledge (Nielsen, 1990, p. 30). Research, from a feminist perspective, then becomes a process of identifying obstacles to free dialogue and equality and giving voice to those people and everyday life events that have been ignored or silenced in overt and covert ways.

Stacey (1986) argued that a backlash trend exists within the feminist community as a conservative feminism which rejects sexual politics, that is, rejects the struggle against the notion of "women" as a socially constructed category based on subordination. This conservative feminism suggests that the political critique of personal relationships threatens "the family" and deflects energy from the more important struggle for the representation of women in the public sphere. In addition, a conservative feminism promotes the existence of essential differences between women and men rather than locating differences within a social construction of gender and family. She argued that Friedan (1981), Elshtain (1981), and Greer (1971) represent "a great leap backwards for feminists" theoretically and politically. However, this conservative trend has pointed out weaknesses in the "conception of personal politics and our understanding of childhood, heterosexuality, and female subjectivity" (Stacey, 1986, p. 210).

The focus of the present study retains the core of feminism, i.e., sexual politics, and includes Stacey's belief that conservative feminism has highlighted the need to

address the continued viability of heterosexuality, the potential incompatibility of the needs of women and children, and the divisive judgment of false consciousness (p. 230). During the time period this present investigation was done, readers of Ms. struggled with the issue of heterosexual viability, i.e., how empowering are female/male relationships for women? Hagan (1991) wrote an article proposing that women who live with men are trying to grow orchids in the Arctic and therefore require special tools and insights to succeed, and that a "real" feminist loves herself and struggles against the male domination that is designed to restrain her. Readers' letters reflected a belief in the tension inherent in heterosexuality and a feeling of isolation with a spark of some hope as stated by a woman who wrote, "Why do heterosexual women acquiesce to the norms of patriarchy? Why do I feel like a desperate minority because I wouldn't change my name upon marriage, helped create a schedule for sharing household work, express my concerns and expect to be listened to and supported in my relationship and left alone when I ask for time alone? I'm 24; where are the heterosexual feminist voices of my generation?" (Binns, 1992). This study, while based on women and men older than Binns, focused on couples who also sensed they were acting on their feminists beliefs while in a heterosexual relationship.

A postmodern stance proposes that the criteria to determine truth claims rest upon a modernist belief in transcendent reason that is ahistorical, removed from the body and place. Postmodernism emphasizes the "difference as following from and being limited to the demands of specific political contexts" (Fraser & Nicholson, 1990, p. 10). Postmodern and feminist ideas of reality being socially constructed and a wariness of generalizing findings outside of the boundaries of culture and region informed this study (Fraser & Nicholson, 1990). Postmodernism reminds us that there is no one type of feminism or "feminist" marriage. However, postmodernism could turn into relativism, that women have nothing in common, unable to provide criteria for the "ethical and practical policy issues [that] are part of the larger process of knowledge formation" (Nielsen, 1990, p. 28). Feminism offers a political agenda, that is, offers local and grounded criteria of what is liberating for women and men and also offers a critique of power missing from postmodernism (Baber & Allen, in press). A feminist postmodernism opens up the possibility of coalitions of women and men working together for gender justice (Allen & Baber, 1992). A feminist postmodern lens brings into view

the diversity of women's experiences, including those feminists who maintain relationships with men (Tong, 1989) and that men, as well as women, can have insight into and control of their participation in the domination of others (Flax, 1990). Such a perspective allows for the possibility to move beyond the old model of female subordination and male domination and toward more enriching relationships for women and men.

Research Related to Conceptual Framework

Studies Using General Systems Perspective

Limited research on marriage has been conducted using general systems perspective as a conceptual framework. Historically, the general systems approach translated into research concerning communication, or information exchange, and focused on observing patterns of interaction between members of a family (see Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967). Since the 1950s, a general systems perspective has been integral in the development of more specific theories of family life, especially in the applied field of family therapy, for example Bowen's family systems theory, structural family therapy, strategic therapy, and integrative family therapy (see Gurman & Kniskern, 1981). More recently, Marks (1986, 1989) applied the concept of triangles from Murray Bowen's family systems theory to describe the self and the marital system. Although general systems perspective informs the work of a large group of family therapists (Gurman & Kniskern, 1981), empirical research is still called for to validate systems concepts and evaluate process and outcome of therapy (Piercy & Sprenkle, 1990; Thomas & Wilcox, 1987).

Feminist Studies of Marriage

Feminist scholars have critiqued the large institutional structures such as economy, class, politics (see Tong, 1989) and interpersonal relationships (Acker et al., 1981). In studying the latter, feminists have analyzed the social construction of reality (Fishman, 1983), of changing social structures (Smith, 1987), and of gender (Glenn, 1987) as applied to families. Often feminist analyses of marriage and family life have

taken the form of reviews of the literature pertaining to relationships (Ferree, 1990; Thompson & Walker, 1989). In a personal account, McBride (1976) chronicled her struggle with being a married feminist and concluded that "[t]o be *alive* means to be open to apparent contradictions, to expand our horizon of expectations, not to be closed to experiences. Growth comes about when the person is comfortable saying, 'I am this *and* that'" (p. 205, emphasis in original).

Rubin (1983) used the feminist ideas of Chodorow (1978) and Dinnerstein (1976) to describe the status of intimate relationships, and declared that women and men remain strangers to one another largely due to being raised only by females. Bernard (1982) declared that two marriages exist, a his and a hers. She asserted that marriage is more attractive and healthier for men than for women. Bernard was optimistic that couples were struggling to improve marriage to make it beneficial for both spouses. However, she concluded with the calling for the "upgrading" of the woman's marriage.

Research Related to Method

Cuber and Harroff's (1965) research on couples who believed their marriages to be successful is well known for its use of in-depth, unstructured interviews as a data collection methodology. They interviewed 437 women and men for at least three hours each, although most interviews went well beyond this time. This study provided a clear example of the substantial generation of hypotheses as well as description of people's lives resulting from the use of qualitative interviewing.

Rubin (1983) interviewed 150 couples, mostly married, together for at least 5 years, from throughout the United States. She was interested in a research question similar to the ones in this present study: "why is it that change [in relationships between men and women] comes with such difficulty?" (p. 15). Based on the excerpts from interviews included in her book, the participants seemed to have spoken with some candor with Rubin about their struggles, successes, and disappointment in intimate relationships with the other sex. Rubin (1983) ended her book with the hope that it taught at least this lesson: "Society and personality live in a continuing reciprocal relationship with each other. The search for personal change without efforts to change institutions within which we live and grow will, therefore be met with only limited reward" (p. 206). She concluded that couples are in transition and that they are

sometimes successful and sometimes unsuccessful in changing the social and psychological constraints which hinder them from transforming heterosexual relationships into ones based on equality.

McKee and O'Brien (1983) interviewed men as they became fathers and discovered some implications of women interviewing men and how the research situation differs from women interviewing women. They found that men had less to say and said it more quickly than their spouses. McKee and O'Brien suggested that men might have less to say about pregnancy and babies and/or might be inexpressive about their experiences. They believed that advantages exist when women interview men: some men found it easier to talk with a woman about pregnancy than talking with other men. The researchers did experience a few situations in which they were frightened about being alone with a male participant. In such occasions, they used the props of research, the recorder, clipboard, pen, and interview questions to emphasize the formality rather than informality of the situation.

Oakley (1981) described interviewing women and choosing not to follow the traditional formulas for interviewing: remaining neutral, maintaining professional distance, and discouraging participants from asking questions. She interviewed 55 women for a total of 178 interviews. The average total period of interviewing a woman was just over 9 hours. She found herself responding to personal questions, questions on baby care, health, pregnancy, and the research. She believed that answering questions and becoming involved in the participants' lives (she was at the delivery for some women) established a rapport with the women that offered them some personal satisfaction for participating in the study.

Summary

A feminist perspective was used to elaborate on the selected concepts of system, process, and context by including gender and sociohistorical and cultural analyses. A feminist postmodern perspective reveals the contradiction of the diversity and the unity of women's experiences. While the unit of analysis was the marriage of heterosexual feminists, a general systems perspective also allowed for the possibility to understand a marital system by considering the influence of its members as well as the influence of larger systems. Placing women in the center of vision, i.e., considering them and their

well-being, becomes vital in the assessment of their status of subordination and equality within marriage (Allen & Baber, 1992). A feminist perspective introduces the concept of gender as a possible organizing principle in people's everyday experiences of marriage. A purpose of this study was to understand how women and men in marriage view gender and their experiences of being valued and devalued within their marriage and lives.

The focus on process highlighted the patterns of interaction and meanings couples had that assisted them and/or hindered them from developing and maintaining a marriage based on feminist beliefs. When seen through a feminist lens, process becomes connected with differential experiences of power. Another purpose of the present study was to understand if and to what extent spouses experienced any differences of power.

Finally, both general systems and feminist perspectives call for a consideration of context, although scholars from the latter persuasion have been more diligent in its application of contextual factors to the analysis of everyday life. The present study focuses on the contextual factors spouses experience as being influential in combining feminism and marriage.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Overview of Research Design

An implication of the feminist assumption of the "personal is political," that is, what occurs in society is reflected in personal lives and relationships, is an examination of individuals' experiences, interactions, and relationships (Walker et al., 1988). In order to understand a research participant's experience, Denzin (1989b) advocated theoretical and methodological strategies that allow for the study of processes, interactions, and meanings. Therefore, a qualitative research design was utilized to study how feminists define their marital situations and to determine if they are transforming marriage into a relationship that values both spouses (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Such research is quite consistent with a feminist perspective and general systems thinking (Acker et al., 1983; Duhi, 1983; Nielsen, 1990; Weinberg, 1975). A feminist perspective that created the foundation of this study's conceptual framework also guided its methodology. Thompson (1992) discussed four critical components of feminist methodology: method, agenda, epistemology, and ethics. In this chapter, these four components will be presented as an overview of feminist methodological concerns. The remainder of the chapter describes the methodology of the present study.

Methods

Thompson (1992) acknowledged the debate among feminist scholars about what methods are more feminist than others. Some feminists have proposed that qualitative data collection and analysis are more responsive to women's lives and experiences of marginality (Smith, 1987; Westkott, 1979). However, Thompson (1992) aimed "to push readers beyond a squabble about qualitative versus quantitative methods" (p. 4) by explaining the uniqueness of feminist methodology centers on questions about agenda, epistemology, and ethics. Thus, the method used in this investigation is consistent with a feminist perspective but it not the only method available to feminist researchers.

Qualitative interviewing, the main method of data collection in this study, is defined by Taylor and Bogdan (1984) as "*repeated face-to-face encounters between the*

researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words" (p. 77, emphasis in original). In qualitative research, the researcher is considered one form of instrumentation (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). As Du Bois (1983) eloquently stated,

We are the instruments of observation and understanding; we are the namers, the interpreters of our lives. To try to work without this instrument and this language is to do nothing other than what most of science has tried to do: pretend to leave the self and the valuing process out of science-making, and thus perpetuate the image of science as the objective observer of fixed reality, the neutral seeker after an external and objectifiable reality (p. 112, emphasis in original).

Agenda

A feminist agenda includes research *on* women, i.e., studying the particular concerns and lives of women to correct for sexism in subject matter and theory. A more radical agenda includes research *for* women (Smith, 1987), i.e., making research decisions for the specific purpose of "emancipating women and enhancing their lives" (Thompson, 1992, p. 4). Thompson (1992) proposed five ways in which research in family studies could be used for women, three of which are applicable to this present study.

First, research should "help women connect their personal experience in families to the larger social context" (Thompson, 1992, p. 4). The social and political contexts of the participants' lives in the present study are discussed and incorporated in the analysis. Personal situations such as women rather than men becoming the primary parent are linked to the social context. In this case, one parent is required to remain a full-time employee in order to secure health insurance, and the salary disparity between women and men typically results in the father remaining the employed parent.

Second, research for women should "capture how women struggle against and adapt to family relations that nurture and oppress them" (Thompson, 1992, p. 4). Some of the women in the present study struggled with their husbands over equally sharing parenting and household responsibilities. These struggles are presented in Chapter 4 as well as the couples' experiences of building equality in their marriages.

Third, research for women should "provide a vision on nonoppressive family relations" (Thompson, 1992, p. 4). The participants in the present study described their attempts to create marriages based on feminists beliefs. This blending of marriage

and feminism, or the blending of the traditional and the radical, is interpreted and presented as a feminist reclamation of marriage.

Research infused with feminist principles results in knowledge that can be used by women. A goal of this research project is to make accessible any results that can be helpful to women and men as they struggle with the creation of relationships dedicated to the empowerment of both spouses (Du Bois, 1983; Westkott, 1979). Copies of this study will be sent to all of the participants. In addition, articles explaining the results of the present investigation will be written and submitted to professional journals and popular literature for possible publication.

Epistemology

Analysis proceeded within the tension of wanting to be careful with participants' lives (Allen, 1989) and to offer a critical interpretation. Thompson (1992) offered a helpful application of the idea of "constructed knowers" to the research process (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). Constructed knowledge builds upon reflexivity, that is the use of personal knowledge, feelings, judgments, and thoughts to "push at the boundaries of their self-awareness" to generate knowledge (p. 10). This process of reflexivity calls upon the researcher to acknowledge personal interests in the research topic, continually question interpretations, and critically examine personal biases. Allen and Baber (1992) proposed that researchers, as feminists concerned about power of privilege, study those who have equal or more power. At the time of initiating this study, I was 30 years old and had been married for almost 7 years. I am an educated white, middle-class woman, raised in a lower-income family in a rural area of Pennsylvania. In many ways my life paralleled those of the female participants in this study: I identified myself as a feminist prior to marriage, kept my name upon marriage, consciously enacted a wedding ceremony reflective of my feminist beliefs, and continued to hold hope for a feminist transformation of heterosexual marriage, i.e., the possibility of "upgrading" marriage for women (Bernard, 1982).

During the analysis, I faced the dilemma of interpreting inequality when women did not perceive this. Thompson (1992) stated that the resolution of this dilemma is neither to dismiss women with the "false consciousness" concept nor "accept any version women offer as reality" (p. 16). She agreed with MacKinnon (1983) that "the first

approach denies and devalues women's experience, and the second approach slides into relativism" (p. 16). I responded to this dilemma by choosing neither resolution but acknowledged that women experienced both moments of equality and moments of subordination in their lives and the latter, while not labeled as such, often became areas of marital conflict due to the women's feminist consciousness.

Ethics

Thompson (1992) recommended that scholars consider two ethical questions when conducting research: "Is my research project exploitive of or empowering to participants and other people involved in the project?" and "How can I avoid oppressive objectification of my research participants?" (p. 14). A feminist perspective challenges the norm of objectivity, that a researcher can interact with others as a disinterested party and can portray objectively and explain the experience of the participant. I answered participants' questions about my personal life and professional background and shared my political and religious views when asked about them. In two cases, I confirmed individuals' choices to seek professional assistance, based on a professional training in family therapy and knowledge of local resources (Cook & Fonow, 1990; Oakley, 1981).

In this study, the process of a mutual, although perhaps not equal, construction of understanding and explanation was an explicit focus of attention. Participants were sent a preliminary draft of Chapter 4 and were invited to respond by telephone or letter with their reactions to the interpretation of their lives. Participants engaged in the construction of the interpretations as subjects rather than objects through judging what had been written about them (Acker et al., 1983; Thompson, 1992).

I experienced the reconstruction of participants' lives as a tension between desiring a process of equality and acknowledging my own power to determine what finally was said about the participants. At least the recognition and acknowledgement of the tension is called for, even if the resolution is elusive (Acker, et al., 1983; Allen & Baber, 1992; Stacey, 1988; Thompson, 1992). Thus, these results are offered as partial understanding of these couples and their lives (Thompson, 1992).

Description of Sample and Selection Process

Because a goal of this study was to identify if and to what extent feminists are transforming marriage, everyday lives and experiences became the important data to study. In-depth interviews were collected from 10 couples. Qualitative researchers note the repetition of findings after interviewing 15 of the same type of people (Allen, 1989; Bertaux & Bertaux-Wiame, 1981; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). However, it is more difficult to recruit couples in which both partners qualify and desire to participate than it is to recruit individual persons for a research study. Therefore, the goal of 10 couples was considered sufficient.

Participants were recruited through advertisements and the snowball effect (Denzin, 1989b; Rubin, 1983; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). An advertisement was placed in the regional monthly newsletter of the self-identified feminist group, the National Organization for Women (NOW) in June 1991, in the Sunday edition of the regional newspaper in September 1991, in the state NOW's quarterly newsletter in October 1991, and in a regional arts and entertainment newspaper for three weeks in November and December 1991. In addition, two professors at a local university were asked to announce the study to graduate classes during the fall semester of 1991. [See Appendix A for the content of the advertisement.]

Volunteers who met the following criteria were asked to contact the researcher: heterosexual married couples who were self-identified feminists prior to marriage and married for at least 5 years. Couples with more than a few years of marriage were wanted so they would be able to reflect on their relationship process and identify successes and failures in creating a marriage based on feminist beliefs.

Twenty-three volunteers, representing 23 couples, were screened over the phone from June 1991 to January 1992. They either contacted me after reading an advertisement or I contacted them after receiving their names as a referral from other participants or colleagues. Volunteers were labeled participants in the study if they met the criteria and were interviewed. Ten couples met the study's requirements: 6 responded to the advertisements and 4 were referred by participants or colleagues aware of the study. The following table lists the response rate by couple to the various recruitment techniques. The numbers in the following table represent couples.

Table 1
Response to Recruitment Techniques

Advertisement Techniques	Volunteer Couples	Participant Couples
Advertisements		
Regional NOW Newsletter	4	1
State NOW Newsletter	3	2
Regional Newspaper	4	2
Arts Newspaper	3	1
Referrals	9	4
Announcements in Graduate Classes	0	0
Total Couples	23	10

By September 1991, 5 couples participated in initial joint interviews to determine their eligibility to participate in the study, three of which did not meet requirements of the study. Two of these men did not use the label feminist to describe themselves prior to marriage, and one couple was unwilling to use any label to refer to themselves due to religious reasons although they met the rest of the requirements. After September 1991 the phone screenings became more thorough so that eligibility for participation in the study was determined over the phone, eliminating the need to interview couples who ultimately did not qualify for the study. Volunteers were considered ineligible to participate in the study for the following reasons: the man did not self-identify as a feminist currently or prior to marriage; the couple was married fewer than five years; the couple was not legally married; and one partner did not want to participate in the study.

To be considered eligible for the study both partners had to have assumed the label feminist prior to their marriage and had to be willing to assume it currently; had to believe that women are devalued within society and within intimate relationships and struggle against this devaluation within their own relationship; had to be willing to give approximately 2 hours for a joint interview and at least 1 hour for an individual interview; and had to be willing to discuss their marriage and family life.

During the joint interview participants were asked to read and sign a consent form

after the purpose of the study, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw participation at any point were explained. [See Appendix B for a copy of the Participant Consent Form.] This joint interview was done to obtain an initial description of their daily lives and a history of their marriage. During individual interviews participants were asked to clarify information presented in the joint interview, to talk more about the influence of their feminist beliefs on their marriage, and to note satisfactions and dissatisfactions with their marriage. Interviewing occurred in two sessions, one joint and one individual, for each participant. [See Appendix C, for the interview guides for the initial joint and individual interviews.]

This series of interviews followed the data collection model developed by Allen (1989). It provided a screening method that was sensitive to participants' meanings while also offering some consistency in the final sample. In addition, the two interviews provided time for the participants and researcher to establish rapport, allowed participants to reveal themselves at their own pace (Allen, 1989) and gave time for participants to think about the research topic. Contact with participants proceeded through the following stages: initial telephone contact made by volunteers or I called those couples who were referred; follow-up telephone calls were made with couples who met the criteria to schedule interview times; a meeting was held for the joint interview; two meetings were held for individual interviews; a draft of Chapter 4 was sent to the 10 couples and feedback received from 6 couples in the form of telephone calls or letters.

Pilot Study

A pilot study of 2 couples was carried out to refine the interview schedule and to check allotted time for interviews. At the time of the interviews it appeared that the first pilot couple fit the above criteria. Due to the delay in the transcription process, it was not until data collection had almost ended that I found that the couple did not meet all of the stated criteria. Upon reading the transcripts of the interviews with this couple the assumption of the label feminist by the man was not clear. A follow-up telephone call was made in which the man clearly stated he did not use the label to describe himself until after he was married. By this time, however, the couple had served the function of providing feedback on the research process and the interview questions and procedures. [See Appendix D for questions to gather feedback on the research process from couples in

the pilot study.] While this pilot couple did not participate in the main study the second pilot couple did because they met all of the criteria for inclusion.

The main study was altered in the following ways due to the results of the pilot study and the experience of screening telephone calls from other interested couples who did not meet the study's criteria. Couples were asked over the telephone if they both used the label feminist prior to marriage rather than if they thought they were feminists. At least two hours of taping were allotted for interviews unless couples specifically mentioned a time limit. The list of prepared questions was pared down in format to allow easier reading during the interview. This second version was later amended to list topic areas and phrases rather than sentences. This third version proved to be easier to handle during the interviews, listing only short phrases under general topic headings. [See Appendix C for the last version of the interviews guides.] Finally, if a couple was eligible for the study after the screening process, I tried to schedule the joint interview within a week or two, emphasizing the need to begin the interviews quickly. Between the two pilot couples, five interviews times were rescheduled, and it took two months to complete the pilot study.

Data Collection Procedures

The first contact with participants was the screening telephone conversation. Basic information about name, address, length of marriage, age, and other qualifiers for the study were noted. Interviews were arranged to occur at mutually convenient times. Data collection mainly occurred by open-ended interviews with the spouses together and separately. The joint interviews averaged about 2 hours, with a range of 1 and 1/2 to 3 hours. Individual interviews averaged about 1 and 1/2 hours, with a range of 1 and 1/4 to 2 and 1/4 hours. Total interview time spent with each couple ranged from 4 to 6 hours. The participants' homes served as the setting for all of the joint interviews except one and for all of the individual interviews except 4. These five interviews took place in participants' offices.

Rubin (1976, 1983) argued for interviewing partners of a couple separately, to encourage freedom of conversation. This research design allowed for joint and individual interviews, providing the opportunity to observe partners interacting as well as providing the opportunity for spouses to talk in confidence. These observations were

audiotaped and later transcribed. Observations were used as a secondary source to confirm my understanding of how the couples described their typical interactions and relationship styles.

The largest amount of data consisted of audiotaped recordings and transcriptions of the interviews. Triangulation, the use of data from another source for corroboration or elaboration (Denzin, 1989b; Marshall & Rossman, 1989) consisted of a journal of impressions and observations, ongoing reading of feminist literature, and discussion of findings with a small group of professional colleagues with whom I met regularly to discuss issues surrounding the conduct of research. This group produced ideas for paths of inquiry with the data and reflection on the process of research.

Description of Sample

The 20 participants interviewed for this study were white, highly educated, and middle- to upper middle-class. Ages of the participants ranged from 30 to 77. Four women were older than their husbands, and all but two women had degrees equivalent or higher than their husbands. Length of marriage ranged from 5 to 22 years, the average being 11 1/2 years. Participants claimed the label of feminist currently and nine couples had labeled themselves as feminists prior to marriage. The oldest couple considered themselves feminists prior to marriage but did not remember hearing the term feminist until after they had married. Once they had become acquainted with the term, perhaps as early as within a year of their wedding, they used it as a label. The following table provides demographic information as well as noting the general career area of each participant. Pseudonyms are used throughout the study to protect the privacy of the participants and anyone to whom they referred. Quotes from participants' interviews are cited verbatim.

Table 2
Participant Demographics

Name	Age	Years Married	Education	Work
Barb	30	5	B.A.	Government
Dan	33	5	M.A.	Government
Miriam	33	12	M.A.	Research
Larry	35	12	M.A.	Publishing
Ruth	39	8	M.A.	Health Care
Paul	36	8	M.A.	Mental Health
Rose	44	10	Ph.D.	Education
Patrick	35	10	Ph.D.	Education
Sarah	33	10	B.A.	Government
Shawn	36	10	B.A.	Small Business
Mary	36	15	B.A.	Arts
John	36	15	A.A.	Small Business
Rachel	43	13	2 M.A.s	Mental Health
Tony	44	13	M.A.	Consultant
Jennifer	48	7	B.A.	Small Business
Calvin	43	7	Ph.D.	Education
Deborah	52	13	Ph.D.	Education
Milton	39	13	M.A.	Government
Elizabeth	67	22	Ph.D.	Education
Carl	77	22	Ph.D.	Education

Unit of Analysis

The heterosexual marriages of feminists were the unit of analysis. The goal of the analysis was to discuss findings on three levels of generality (Runyan, 1984) as adapted to the study. The following levels were considered. What was characteristic about each individual marriage ("what is true of individual human beings"); what were group differences among the marriages studied ("what is true of groups of human beings"); and what was common across all of the marriages studied ("what is true of all human beings") (Runyan, 1984, p. 7).

This analysis followed Thompson and Walker's (1982) description of using insiders' view of the relationship as data on the relationship. Although Thompson and Walker focused on quantitative data, their explanation of using dyadic information as the basis of analyzing a relationship also can apply to qualitative data. Discrepancies of perception were not considered errors in obtaining an understanding of the relationship.

Rather, discrepancies were considered data to analyze to provide information on the relationship.

In the study, both spouses were participants, providing information and assessments about themselves, their partners, and their marriage. Partners gave information about individual demographic data, characteristics, expectations, values, behaviors for themselves and their partners. These individual assessments provided data on the couple's relationship, such as the extent of similarity or dissimilarity between the partners' perceptions of each other. A relationship assessment can be acquired by asking both spouses to report on their perceptions of the characteristics of the relationship, such as equality, power distribution, and closeness. In addition participants reported on their personal views and their perceptions of their partners' views of their relationships.

Another way to consider using marriage as the unit of analysis is to combine partners' interpersonal interactions with their subjective experiences (Huston & Robins, 1982). While the major method of acquiring information on interactions was self-reports of couples' interactions, the observations made during the joint interviews acted as another source of interactional data. The interactional data gathered from observations and self-reports and the data from spouses' self reports of their subjective experiences were included in the analysis of marriage.

The feminist foundation of this study compels the analysis ultimately to assess the well-being of the women in the study (Thompson, 1992). This assessment was accomplished by considering how well women fared in their marriages. In addition, the extent to which couples were able to transform marriage from a relationship of oppression to one of empowerment was regarded as an indication of women's well-being as well as an indication of men's positive response to a new construction of masculinity (Kimmel, 1987).

Analysis of Data

In a system such as a couple, there exists an infinite array of processes and phenomena occurring, such that any observation is limited and the resulting understanding and explanation incomplete (Duhl, 1983). Thus, given the topic of how feminism influences marriage, participants were encouraged to determine what was

important for me to understand. My own thinking about this topic and understanding of the literature on feminism and marriage directed what questions I asked. Weinberg (1975) concluded that the role of the observer in explaining the relationships of a system is usually ignored in systems writing. However, in Duhl's (1983) version of systems thinking, multicentric human systems thinking, the researcher conceptualizes self as part of the system being described, and knows that the "map is not the territory," that is, the patterns seen by the researcher are a map which is in the researcher's head.

Data analysis followed the model established by Allen (1989) which is a synthesis of various procedures for managing qualitative data. The analysis was guided by the study's conceptual framework (a feminist interpretation of concepts from general systems theory and a feminist postmodern critique), the research questions, participants' experiences of their combination of feminism and marriage, and my own understanding and life experiences.

Due to a delay in locating typists to transcribe the interviews, a thorough, ongoing analysis of data was not possible to the degree advocated by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggested that only experienced researchers use ongoing analysis effectively and efficiently, although they recognized that some analysis proceeds anyway because researchers automatically reflect on the content and process. To aid the process of analysis, a tape recorder was used to record hunches, reflections, observations, and theoretical ideas. I taped comments after each interview, after the research meetings with colleagues, and when considering theory development. Later I transcribed these taped comments into a computer program for qualitative data analysis, Hyperqual for the Macintosh computer (Padilla, 1991).

Coding procedures outlined by Taylor and Bogdan (1984) were followed along with an adaptation of open and axial coding proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Open coding is the process of examining the data, and naming and categorizing the phenomena. Axial coding is a process of connecting categories of data in order to demonstrate their relationships. Analysis of data included determining which themes occurred throughout the interviews as well as explaining negative cases (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).

Transcripts were read once while listening to the audiotaped recordings of the interviews to check for typists' accuracy. All interviews were read a second time to gain an overall impression of their content. During the third reading a list was made of

themes and topics covered by questions. Themes with the most substantiation were included in the analysis (Allen, 1989). A list of each participant's responses to these themes and topics was made in order to compare them to one another. From these lists a chart was made to more easily compare responses. From this point on the idea of axial coding was used as a way to think about connecting codes to one another. The fourth reading of the interviews resulted in generation of codes and coding families. The computer program Hyperqual was used to manage coding of the data. At first, 76 preliminary codes were formed and reapplied to the data during a fifth reading. During this last reading codes were condensed and eliminated and connected through coding families, resulting in 33 codes and 6 coding families. Final refinement of the codes and coding families continued through the initial stages of writing as the process of writing assisted in the analysis and synthesis of the data. Throughout the analysis, observer comments and theoretical memos were consulted to aid in the analysis. [See Appendix E for the codes and coding families.]

A preliminary draft of Chapter 4 was sent to couples for their review with a request that they contact me should they have strong reactions to what they read. Each couple received a stamped envelope for them to mail their responses. They were also invited to call, collect if necessary, to respond verbally to the interpretations of their interviews. This process of receiving feedback from participants about results of analysis provides some measure of legitimacy of the research interpretations (Acker et al., 1983; Rubin, 1976). Six couples responded with feedback. I spoke with 6 participants, 4 women and 2 men, and received letters from 2 couples. Comments included disagreement with a presentation of why one woman chose to put parenting ahead of her career, updated information about decisions couples had made since their interviews, pointing out typing errors in quotations, and a general reaction of being interested in the results. In addition, one man stated that he thought my critical review of marriage "was tough." Participants' comments and corrections were incorporated into Chapter 4. Many couples had mentioned their desire to meet one another, so a date for a party was suggested in the letter that accompanied the draft. The party had been scheduled but had not been held at the time of this writing.

During the individual interviews participants were asked how they thought they were affected by participating in this study. Most of the participants responded that the

interviews provided them the opportunity to talk about their marriages with their partners as they compared answers to questions. In addition, two participants said they recognized that their feminist beliefs were part of a larger world view that also included political and religious ideas. One couple said that the interviews would have benefitted their relationship more had they not just completed therapy during which time they discussed similar topics.

Criteria to Establish Validity

The guidelines noted below were followed to establish a valid interpretation of the data. First, a description of participants' experiences "needs to be careful, detailed, rigorous" (Du Bois, 1983, p. 110). Adequate reconstruction of the participants' lives rather than prediction was the goal (Acker et al., 1983). The reconstruction also included describing myself in relation to the research topic (Allen & Baber, 1992; Du Bois, 1983; Cook & Fonow, 1990; Nielsen, 1990).

Second, adequacy or validity of interpretation guided the analysis back to the theoretical underpinnings of the study. In this case it was a feminist perspective which indicated a need for research to lead to knowledge useful for women. "Description without an eye for transformation is inherently conservative and portrays the subject as acted-upon rather than as an actor or potential actor" (Cook & Fonow, 1990, p. 79). Thus, participants were considered to be actors or subjects rather than objects of research. They were viewed as social agents of their worlds. Their everyday lives and social relations that influenced their lives were crucial to an adequate interpretation of the data (Smith, 1987).

Third, description, explanation, and conceptualization needed to reflect the complexity and context of experience. "To be open to this complexity and to see things in context means to move out of the realms of discourse and logic that rely on linear and hierarchical conceptions of reality, on dualistic models of human nature and intercourse, on dichotomous modes of thought, discourse and analysis" (Du Bois, 1983, p. 110). The conceptual framework guiding this study emphasized the requirement of context to the understanding of meaning and the need to go beyond dualistic categories of explanations. Thus, learning about what influenced couples' attempts at combining feminism and marriage was crucial to understanding and explaining their experiences.

It was important to report the range of variations and the specificity of the variations found. The broader context in terms of social movements, trends, cultural values and the changes or process linked to the broader context were included to develop explanatory power (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Finally, the process of research must be explicit. Although findings of qualitative research cannot be exactly replicated due to differences in researchers, the steps in doing the research (e.g., sample selection, data collection, coding, decision-making processes) should be replicable (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Du Bois, 1983). Tesch (1990) likened the results produced by various researchers studying the same phenomenon to artists who paint the same person: all versions will be different from one another yet all capture a likeness or an essence of the person. The interpretation of these participants' lives offered in the present study is a version that provides a feminist critique of marriage.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Introduction

This study is a thin slice of life, concerned with the lives of heterosexual married feminists in the latter part of the twentieth century. Interviews with 10 couples occurred during the summer, autumn, and winter of 1991-1992 in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Eight of the couples lived in a metropolitan region of just under 1 million people while two other couples lived in separate university towns within the same state. Couples were interviewed during a period of time in which the backlash against the feminist agenda of gender equality was widely apparent. In 1991 Susan Faludi published her notable book, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*. Faludi examined how research was used to warn women that the pursuit of equality and justice leads to lonely, poor, and unhappy, if not depressed, existences. Faludi argued that when explained correctly, research told a different story: feminism has empowered women and enhanced their lives unequivocally. Meanwhile, law professor Anita Hill spoke before a United States congressional committee about her experiences of sexual harassment from Clarence Thomas; she was belittled by questions regarding her mental health and emotional stability while he was appointed an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. Accounts of rape trials and anti-abortion demonstrations flooded newspapers and the evening newscasts throughout the summer and autumn of 1991.

During this time of backlash and public questioning of the goals of feminism, 10 couples, self-described as feminists, spoke about their lives as married women and men. All of the couples saw themselves in a minority as heterosexual married feminists. The youngest couple was particularly pleased to actually fit a research category because they felt different from their peers. This feeling of uniqueness, of doing marriage differently from most couples, repeated itself throughout the study. However, evident in the talks with them was a fear that the backlash against feminism and its corresponding political conservatism would damage the advances feminism has made for women and also for men. They were eager to talk about their relationships, glad that the lives of married heterosexual feminists were a research interest and hopeful that their participation

would in some way counteract this backlash.

The analysis offered here is done so in the spirit to empower women and men through identifying successful strategies and possible obstacles to their development of the equal relationships they desire with one another. The analysis and conclusions sometimes challenge what people said, in the belief that it is through an ongoing dialogue, not a final pronouncement by a researcher, that knowledge is developed and used for social change. However, I accept the final responsibility for the analysis and the final version of the study (Gorelick, 1991; Stacey, 1988). The interpretation that couples experienced both moments of equality and moments of domination and subordination was arrived at after weeks of struggling over the data, trying to reconcile what people said with what they described.

The couples lived within a landscape, a larger context, of the subordination of women, within a relationship form that has been critiqued as inherently oppressive to women (Ferree, 1990; Glenn, 1987; Goodrich, 1991; Hare-Mustin, 1991). The oppression that couples labeled as such originated externally to their marriage or internally as expectations of the other partner. Locating oppression within the relationship was incompatible with seeing the marriage as based on equality. Couples described a communication process that functioned to build equality in their marriages. However, some of the couples' explanations for their parenting and domestic choices functioned as a "marriage between equals discourse," i.e., using language to conceal inequality (Hare-Mustin, 1991, p. 51). Before this discussion of subordination and empowerment, however, the development of feminism in the participants, their choice of marriage, and how they define feminism will be addressed. What is continuous in this analysis is the struggle between participants' traditional and feminist roots as they eventually attempted to blend both within marriage.

The Development of Feminism in the Participants

Although participants ranged in age from 30 to 77, they shared similar background events that gave rise to their feminist development. A mixture of being raised by parents exhibiting behaviors typically associated with the other gender, the impact of the second wave of feminism as it hit college campuses in the late 1960s and 1970s, and the observation or direct experience of discrimination either in the classroom or in the

workplace created a fertile soil in which the origins of feminist beliefs were encouraged to take root.

Growing Up

Participants' feminist roots were nurtured by the role model of at least one parent who demonstrated competency in skills or attitudes typically associated with the other gender. Generally the mothers were the model of androgyny as they worked outside of the home, discussed politics, and/or paid bills while also being the parent in charge of caretaking. Four women and four men mentioned mothers who worked at least part time outside of the home, while an additional woman and four men described mothers who were competent, strong, vocal women. For example, Mary and John grew up with parents, mothers especially, who performed tasks typically associated with men, as they described in their joint interview.

Mary: We both had mothers that worked. We grew up both of us in homes with working mothers and who were very strong in their beliefs. Not necessarily in terms of feminism, it was just an accepted thing that the woman was an integral part of the financial decisions. My mother assisted my father and they worked together in setting up his business, and so they were pretty much equal partners.

John: In my case, like Mary mentioned, both of my parents worked and so when they got home at night Pop cooked dinner and Mama sat down and paid the bills and took care of the household stuff.

Four participants grew up in military families in which mothers were placed in the position of doing all of the tasks due to the cyclical absence of the fathers.

Shawn: I was going to say it is funny because both of us come from military backgrounds where the dads weren't home a lot so the mothers ran the households.

A careful reading of the above quotation shows the default position of the mothers. Mothers were considered in this case to be powerful due to the absence of their husbands. In Mary's quotation above, she mentioned her parents as equal partners in setting up her father's business. Although it became apparent later in the interview that it was a family business, such language reflects the struggle to change traditional concepts such as father as breadwinner. Thus begins to appear in these participants' lives the understanding of women's power as relative to men's.

Nine of the 10 men in this study shared the position of first born; this number included Tony who was an only child. The only man who was not first born was John who had an older brother and two younger sisters. The position of first born placed these men in a position to be aware of any economic difficulties as well as the requirements to run a household. Six of these men described their mothers' situations in empathic terms, acknowledging hard times and their mothers' courage. While not a first born, John experienced economic deprivation while growing up. His parents struggled financially, as did the mothers of two other men, Dan and Carl. These mothers supported themselves and their children when their husbands became ill and eventually died. Dan and Carl saw first-hand the economic and workplace discrimination that their mothers faced and their struggles to keep their families together. As the eldest children, they assumed some of the caretaking of their other siblings and much of the housework, as Dan described:

Dan: My father had a stroke when I was 10 and my mother, who had been sort of working off and on during my younger years, she was pretty much forced to become the sole provider for our family.. So my mother became probably one of the most independent people that I have ever been around. Very, very, strong. Don't want to use that fallacy, she's not domineering, but a very strong force. Certainly not typical of what I guess a lot of people would consider a mother's role would be. I think that had a lot of influence on me. My mother taught me to cook. We did housework, there's three boys and a girl, my sister being the youngest. We were just as likely to be cleaning house as we were as to be cutting grass, tinkering with cars or that kind of stuff.

Carl also introduced the importance of taking on household chores and caregiving, a factor that 5 other men mentioned as being important in learning about equality in the home. As far as these men remember, the household tasks were not gendered. In their joint interview, Carl and Elizabeth related the impact his mother had on him.

Carl: I have always said that my feminism I think is rooted in the fact that my mother, my father died earlier. My mother made the impression on me even before my father died.

Elizabeth: He is the oldest of four and his father died when he was 11 and the other children were stair steps down to five. Yes, she was a feminist in being very willing to work and very independent spirited.

Carl: See the struggle that she had, and the guts that she had, the love that she gave to her children and to me. And the fact that she carried the burden and would ask me to help. And that I was the man of the family. I thought she had a raw deal. Then she too, she did something else she reinforced...She put me on a, I can remember to this day, a hercules powder box a wooden box beside the dishpan on the table where she washed dishes. I would help to rinse. So mothers are very important as far as I am concerned.

The credit these men gave their mothers in their development of feminist beliefs echoed the men in Kimball's sample of what she termed "egalitarian husbands" (Kimball, 1983).

Five women mentioned that their father's presence was influential in developing feminist beliefs. Their fathers supported these women's educational interests and modeled nurturing behavior such as ironing, cooking, or caretaking. Barb's father did not laugh at her but her closest female friend did when she disclosed her dream of being a jet pilot when she grew up. Her father responded seriously to her career goal and assisted her in locating a university that offered aviation as a major. Mary and Rachel were the oldest of all girls in their families and thus consider themselves to have been treated as the son their parents never had. However, this distinction also carried with it conflicting messages, including the subtle message that it was an honor, and their lives would have been different had they had a brother to receive the accolades.

Rachel: I remember my father, one of the few things he ever made for me, he made me a podium and bought me a full length mirror and I was to stand in my room at the podium practicing my debate speeches. And I was in debate because he encouraged me to do that. But at the same time he would say to me, "Now Rachel don't let the boys know you are smart." It was a real double message.

Table 4 lists the parental characteristics mentioned by the participants as important in their development of feminist beliefs. Also included is the participation of men as boys in housework and caregiving experiences.

Table 3
Parental Characteristics Mentioned by Participants and Men Involved in Housework and Caregiving as Boys

Name	Mother Employed	Mother Strong	Father Nurturant	Father Involved	Housework Caregiving by Men as Boys
Barb Dan	√ √	√ √		√	√
Miriam Larry	√	√		√	√
Sarah Shawn		√ √		√	
Mary John	√ √	√ √			√
Ruth Paul		√			
Rachel Tony		√	√	√	
Rose Patrick	√	√			√
Jennifer Calvin	√	√	√	√	
Deborah Milton					√
Elizabeth Carl	√	√			√

In addition to Mary and Rachel, five other women mentioned how inside and outside of their families they also heard messages telling them they couldn't do certain activities because they were girls, that they had to learn to be ladies. Thus, these women began as girls to incorporate an ability to manage two conflicting ideologies: to be in charge of their lives and to gain other's approval for life choices.

Some of the parents' liberal political ideas and experiences of poverty and discrimination created a social awareness in the participants. Larry's mother related the injustices she experienced in Germany, while his father was a New Deal democrat, "rooting for the underdog." Mary's mother was passed over by customers who wanted to deal with her husband even though they shared running the business. Dan and Carl watched their mothers face discrimination at work. These experiences geared

participants to the ideas and challenges that awaited them on college campuses. This next section reviews the significance of the 1960s legacy and the social movements that extended into the 1970s in terms of the participants' feminist beliefs.

The Environment of Higher Education

The influence of families was not enough to guarantee feminist beliefs in later life for these people. Some participants mentioned the lack of a feminist awareness on the part of younger siblings or the outright condemnation of women's rights by older brothers and wondered how they could have grown up in the same family. Of course they actually experienced their families differently and reached adulthood in different cultural times (Dunn & Plomin, 1990). Being in the milieu of a college or university campus in the late 1960s to middle 1970s had a profound impact developmentally on the majority of the participants, whether they were students or faculty, as one man said.

Calvin: I don't know. Let me just say that it seemed to me that the college atmosphere of an undergraduate school was extremely important to me in focusing my ideas. I found it extremely stimulating and challenging. So that was a very important experience for me in shaping my philosophy, and I'm very thankful to have been exposed to the people that I was exposed to. And although I was never as radical as a number of my friends, to have been exposed to those ideas and the challenge that they presented, I think was really important. I think that certainly impacted on what we've been talking about.

Higher education was an opportunity for men to be challenged with liberal thought and, as four men noted in particular, to seek the viewpoints and experiences of women. Overall, the men spoke of their education in very positive terms. One man noted:

Paul: The women in my life growing up were strong women....So I grew up in a predominantly male environment with strong women and...began to realize in high school and more in college that I didn't like wimpy women when it came to dating and relating and such.

Education for the women, however, provided another milieu of mixed messages. Six of the women told stories of discrimination, blocked career goals, and sexual harassment due to their gender. Rachel, 43, with two masters degrees, told a saga of a 12-year battle to be allowed to complete her doctoral degree.

Rachel: My dissertation advisor sexually harassed me and when that issue got resolved all of a sudden then I was a liability to him....I wrote the first three chapters of my dissertation twice but they were never acceptable to him, and he told me they wouldn't be. He won that one....I would call the university every couple of years to see if he was still there....Two years ago I decided the hell with it, I am going to try it again....But the term, "they don't get it" was the operative term there....The department chairman was supportive in many ways but he wasn't supportive enough. It was fraught with lots of warnings and pitfalls and I better be careful about this and I better be careful about that. I really better not tell anybody why I didn't finish but I better come up with something and it better be convincing. And then there was always a chance that [the dissertation chair could squash] the deal at the end. So I am still hanging because I still haven't completely solved it. But I have decided that I may start a whole new program at [another university].

One of the four participants who did not cite parents as being instrumental in the formation of feminist beliefs was Deborah, a 52 year-old, who explained that she was raised to be a southern lady. The first time Deborah attempted graduate school in the early 1960s social constraints pressured her out of her first areas of interest and into library science and into the decision to marry her first husband.

Deborah: I really wanted very much to go on to grad school and be a professor only I realized that women didn't do that and had conflicts over the fact that all the other graduate students were male and how dare I give the best paper in seminar and all of the male graduate students had wives to fix lunches for them and why wasn't I home fixing the lunch? At that point I more or less settled things by dropping graduate work in history or philosophy and getting a master's in library science in case anything happened and marrying which was really the only option I saw as a viable one.

Later in the middle 1970s, working as a librarian on a university campus in order to support herself and her two small daughters after her husband left, she attended a lecture that opened the door of the feminist home to her.

Deborah: I was figuring out yes, we can survive, and I didn't quite know what I wanted to do next. I was beginning to get bored at the reference desk....Carter Hayward, who was one of the first women ordained in the Episcopal church... came and spoke. And the kind of person she was, the way she was able to put together ideas and who she was, the kind of women I met when I went to hear her speak, just all sort of, she mentioned the title of Mary Daly's book *Beyond God the Father*. Just to hear that phrase said made me realize how much I had conceptualized all power as masculine. The upshot of all that was...the next July I decided that I was going to quit my job at the library and use the money I had inherited from my father and go to graduate school in history.

A few years earlier Ruth had tried to pursue preparation for ordination but was blocked by church doctrine that forbade ordination of women.

Ruth: Let's see I would say that I became a feminist while in college. During that time I organized and participated in women's consciousness raising groups and it was at that point that I realized I did not like women...this was not a healthy attitude to have and that derived from family of origin stuff and went about and started making some changes....I guess the biggest impetus was the issues related to women's ordination because you can't read the literature, it was a hot issue in the church at the time, and you can't read the literature about that without getting into feminist issues, especially 20 years ago.

Ruth's feminist beliefs among others have led her to a different understanding of spirituality even though she has married a man whose work has religious connections. From the first day of college, Rachel was influenced by thoughts of women's liberation.

Rachel: I longed to be a suffragist when I was a teenager. I thought they had all of the fun....I went to college in 65 and the first night there I was exposed to *The Feminine Mystique*. And I was thrilled to read this book which I found very exciting....and then in 1969 that I met a man who was married, who told me, we were talking and he said "you remind me of my wife, she's a feminist." And I was intrigued. It was the first time ever heard that label....that I ever heard of personally. So, I immediately asked to meet her and I said, I am a feminist too. That was in 1969, I would have been at 21 years old.

Women confronted sexist attitudes among faculty, as Rachel related.

Rachel: A philosophy professor said at one point, "All my colleagues in Washington say 'why do you teach in an all-girls school?' and I explained to them that by teaching here I impact on the next generation." This really pissed me off. I said, "Look, I am not here for the next generation, I am here for me now, and that is good enough."

What a telling quote. These women grew up wanting to believe that being female was good enough but having to defend themselves within contexts that communicated that they were not quite as good as men. Thus, the environment of higher education held different experiences for women and men. As when they were growing up, women in college and graduate school had to contend with messages restraining their actions and future goals. They resisted by speaking up and by maneuvering around obstacles to discover other paths they could take, sometimes paying the price of giving up or altering dreams or goals. Their ability to negotiate a world of impediments was refined, however, as they became more aware of gender injustice and as their determination was

fired by experiencing the subordination of their own well-being in a world of male privilege.

Discrimination

Observing or experiencing discrimination in the workplace cemented many women's feminism. Receiving lower wages than professional men who started work at the same time turned Barb's and Miriam's "ideological" feminism into a practical, everyday survival attitude. Work also introduced women and men to the intersection of class, race, and gender.

Rose: When I worked with the Head Start poverty women I really started thinking of them as women, I guess, and looking at women's problems, issues, concerns....So by working with those women I started almost like a calling, like you would hear some of the fundamentalist ministers talk about. I started believing that maybe something I could do with my life was to find a way to improve the lives of women. And that was more formed or crystallized in terms of how to do that in [a] doctoral program.

Barb, the youngest participant at 30 years of age, was in college at the beginning of the conservative trend among students in the beginning of the 1980s. However, as an aviation major she often was one of two females in her classes and after four years of school was denied entrance into jet training because of spaces for females were limited to two per year. In addition, she was offered lower salaries than her male counterparts upon graduation. Miriam faced the same wage discrimination after acquiring an advanced, high status professional degree. Her husband has the same degree and with one exception has had higher salaries. Miriam confronted her employer with the salary disparities between herself and her male colleagues. However, to increase her salary she had to find a new employer.

Elizabeth faced great wage disparities between herself and male colleagues. She joined with other women to remedy this inequality and succeeded. Mary had a series of what she terms "nurturing jobs" in which the high demands and stress and low respect and power motivated her to stop working outside of the home to spend more of her time as her boys' primary parent and to apply her talents to developing her artistic abilities. This move from the workplace to the home is a common one among women who have jobs with high stress and little power (Chafetz, 1990). Rose brought charges of sexual

harassment against a male colleague who refused to change his behavior after many requests.

The workplace also functioned as a locale where men could check their understanding of feminism with female co-workers or critique the lack of feminist orientation in colleagues. Dan related many examples of talking with colleagues at work about feminism and women's rights. Tony highlighted the importance of the workplace in his development as a feminist.

Tony: I was involved in hotline and other causes of women, strong confident women, who just weren't going to tolerate that crap and yet they thought enough of me to try and rehabilitate me and so they just helped me through that.

Of the men, only Shawn described experiencing discrimination. As a white boy growing up in Hawaii, Shawn lived as a minority among Japanese, Hawaiians, and Samoans. He credited his refusal to allow racist and sexist jokes and attitudes in his workplace to his knowing the pain of being a minority.

This discussion of discrimination highlights women's continued battle with gender injustice as it personally affected their lives. Their feminism assisted them in standing up for themselves which in turn solidified their identification with feminism. Women confronted employers who were discriminatory in salary allotment or made requests of women that they did not make of their male employees. Women continued to resist by speaking out and by finding other work. Meanwhile, men continued their growth in feminism by interacting with women in the workplace.

Feminism Is Planted

What brought these women and men to feminism? Certainly their childhood learning contributed to a mind open to hearing the feminist message. However, childhood experiences were not enough because they also received a large dosage of traditional messages about being female and male in families. Additional formal and informal training was needed to galvanize their identify as feminists and willingness to use the label. For women this training translated into experiencing discrimination but also experiencing success in confronting it by speaking out, establishing themselves in careers, finding new skills to pursue, or building a career to directly challenge oppression of women. For men, the opportunities in childhood to care for the home and

siblings and to develop empathy for their mothers certainly prepared them to hear the message of equality.

Women described their feminist beliefs as more intense than their husbands'. The men seemed to have less urgency about the transforming nature of feminism although they were quite aware of the benefits to them. But the personal experience of discrimination, double messages, sexual harassment, and salary disparities that resulted in feelings of anxiety and anger were lived directly by the women. None of them were spared the reminders of inequality. Perhaps this difference in intensity can be best presented in contrasting the impact of feminism on the lives of Deborah and Milton.

For Deborah, the woman who found the lifeline of feminism in her thirties, feminism was an experience of coming home, a way of making sense of her world and the injustices endured, a way of validating her need for emotional closeness. For her husband Milton, however, feminism was an intellectual pursuit, a 25-year philosophy discussion, a perspective that illuminated the oppression of women and thus explained the differences in self-confidence that he saw between men and women. But feminism was not life-saving for him although it certainly has been life-enhancing.

The soil that gave birth to feminist values and the belief of equality was part of a larger landscape that included messages of subordination of women. These messages also took root in the form of what many called "baggage," the sex-role stereotypes, the expectations of what a wife or husband should do. But the baggage includes other, more subtle and less acknowledged ways of privileging men over women as will be discussed in later sections. Now attention will turn to an example of how couples live within a landscape that nourishes traditional and feminist roots: why these couples chose to marry.

Marriage: The Mixing of Feminist and Traditional Ideological Roots

Participants did not consider marrying to be contrary to their feminist beliefs. The choice of marriage demonstrated acceptance of the cultural and social milieu of the latter part of the 20th century, but how they went about the actual wedding and deciding last names spoke of their feminist roots. The roots of a traditional ideology, experienced by participants as personal needs for long-term intimacy with another person of the

other sex and for social acceptance of themselves and their relationship, and the roots of feminism, experienced as the fundamental and practical right of equality for women and men, gave rise to a decision to marry. The traditional root influenced the actual marriage decision. The feminist root influenced the choice of partners, the wedding ceremony, and the decision about women's last names, although a traditional twist influenced the naming of children.

The Decision to Marry

Practical reasons. Most of the couples mentioned practical reasons for marrying over living together. Commitment and the resulting feelings of security were vital for 5 couples while practical reasons were the major impetus for the other 5 couples to marry. Their desires for emotional intimacy and being with the other could have been fulfilled by living together; however, day-to-day realities, such as parents and career, urged them to take the more socially acceptable arrangement of marriage. Both practical and commitment reasons speak to the value of being accepted by others and of accepting one's needs as legitimate. Rose spoke of the traditional nature of her workplace at the time and her need for acceptance there. She concluded:

Rose: I guess all along we've just tried to set a balance, what we believe to be the right thing...without causing hardship and aggravation to ourselves and others and society, too.

Rachel married her first husband not out of love but because they shared interests in travel and a sophisticated lifestyle. By the time she renewed her relationship with Tony after a decade of separation, she decided that emotional intimacy and love were necessary parts of a relationship.

Rachel: When Tony and I got back together, I did care about him, I did feel close to him. I felt very intimate with him. And marriage to me was almost like a social convenience...The important thing was that I wanted to be with him because I cared about him. I didn't want the ostracism of not being married. I didn't want to have to be worrying about offending my parents. I didn't want to be socially ostracized and so when we got married we down-played to ourselves what it was, what it meant, and the meaning of getting married. He had given me a ring when we had moved in together but he didn't give me one when we got married. So the marriage was kind of the conventional thing that you do to satisfy society, that was my thinking about it.

Miriam and Larry, almost a decade younger than Rachel and Tony but marrying within a

year of them, were more willing to go along with social custom. Perhaps this difference was due to age and a lack of disappointment with an earlier marriage.

Miriam: We knew we were committed to each other anyway, and...some people say, "Oh, we're so committed we don't need the piece of paper." Well we looked at, "Well, we're so committed, so what if we have the piece of paper? We'll get married. Sure, why not?"

Larry: Why not?

Whether they worried about offending parents, bosses, neighbors, or the unspecified society or qualifying for married student housing, couples also recognized some of the privileges given to married heterosexual couples. Some talked about knowing that their life would be easier in general, while others recounted first-hand experiences of having to make medical decisions on behalf of their spouses that would not have been their prerogative had they not been married. In addition, 4 of the 6 couples who had children together believed that married parents were important for children so that they would not feel stigmatized and they would feel part of a family.

Personal reasons: A desire for commitment. For those who spoke of commitment, the agreement to enter a legal arrangement acknowledged their love for one another, their upbringing, and their values. The 3 oldest women spoke of commitment quite strongly as a basis for trust and support of one another as partners. These women also had children through a previous marriage, although Elizabeth's youngest had just started college and was considered launched. Her husband had died 12 years before. Calvin was 36 when he married Jennifer. He carefully considered marriage because he believed that he was not only marrying Jennifer but also was assuming the care of and commitment to her daughters.

Calvin: I feel a real emotional attachment and wanted to spend the rest of my life with her.

Jennifer: Also, I think it was a philosophical or ethical thing that you felt. You didn't just want to live in my house with my children. At least that was my understanding, and my feeling was that if you're going to make a commitment to stay together then marriage is the way that it should be....that the marriage ceremony binds you with the community and provides that extra ounce of commitment.

For Elizabeth and Deborah this "extra ounce of commitment" translated into the need to know that someone with whom they bonded emotionally would continue to stay with them.

Elizabeth: I grew up in a way that has people in dyads, and since I'm heterosexual the way to be in dyads, without all kinds of excess stress in the community, is marriage. I mean I like really lasting relationships. I don't lose my friends. I'm still in touch with college friends. I like to really settle in and trust and marriage is it for me....I don't leave people. I'm not a traditionalist for others. I have lots of younger friends; God knows my children have sequences of relationships in their lives, but that is their choice. For me I would rather live alone. If I am going to have a person in my life I want them in my life.

Deborah told of feeling abandoned by her first husband and also by her father who fought in World War II. Thus, the commitment that marriage signified was especially important to her.

Deborah: I was so afraid that despite the fact that my husband had left, that he had not paid child support, he had remarried and later got divorced...that for us to go on living together endangered my ability to keep my daughters...I don't know at what point the reasons to live together shaded into marriage but it wasn't simply the custody thing but the custody thing was what made me perhaps more antsy to go ahead and marry than Milton was. But I wanted the continuity, I wanted the sense of being committed and someone committed to me that I saw through marriage.

The most recently married couple, who were interviewed 2 weeks after their fifth anniversary, also spoke of marriage as a commitment to work through problems, establishing a trust that would endure differences. Barb used the word conservative to describe her belief in marriage as a way to demonstrate commitment.

Barb: This has got to be the most conservative thing in the entire world. And I realize it...I really firmly believe in marriage. You know, I think it's a wonderful thing. And I also firmly believe in divorce....You can always move in with somebody and I've always seen that as kind of the chicken way out because you can still walk away from that relationship....if I wanted a roommate, I'd go get another roommate. If I want someone to share my life I think there needs to be a bigger commitment to that. When you get married suddenly you realize that this is a serious thing. You can't just walk out the door and have it be over. It doesn't work that way. So you work harder at it, you know, if there's a problem, you solve it. You try to solve it. You know if you can't you go your own ways. But you work harder, I think, that you work harder solving the problem if you're married instead of just living together.

Dan: We were trying in our wedding, I think in our minds, we were establishing something a little bit new, something different.

Barb: I'm glad that we didn't live together because we did start something new when we got married.

The highlighting of commitment in these couples' lives spoke to an awareness of themselves, that they felt more secure in a relationship, more willing to be vulnerable with their partners if they knew the other shared a longterm view of relationships. This emphasis on longterm relationships did not translate into a discrediting of other forms of relationships, except for one man who questioned the viability of alternative pairings due to religious beliefs.

Six of the couples lived together from 4 months to 2 years prior to marriage. The 4 couples who did not live together were those who married before 1974 or after 1982. Elizabeth and Carl, the oldest pair in this study, married in 1969, did not consider living together because they were already drawing attention to themselves due to his divorcing his first wife of 30 years. He was the first to divorce in his workplace and described receiving only part of his raise that year in direct response to the divorce. Those who married after 1982 did so in a milieu of increased conservative politics and the beginning of the backlash against feminism. Jennifer and Calvin and Barb and Dan did not live together for reasons noted above. Ruth was willing to live with Paul but he had to worry about his career connected with a religious group, so they both agreed to marry. See the following table for the participants' age at marriage and information about their children.

Table 4
Age at Marriage and Parenthood

Name	Current Age	Age at Marriage	Prior Marriage /Years Married	Years in Current Marriage Before Children	Number of Children and Their Ages
Barb Dan	30 33	25 28	Nb Nb		No children
Miriam Larry	33 35	21 23	Nb Nb	12	9 month-old son
Sarah Shawn	33 36	23 26	Nb Nb	5	5 year-old son 18 month-old daughter
Mary John	36 36	21 21	Nb Nb	7	8 year-old twin boys
Ruth Paul	39 36	30 27	Nb Nb	3	5 year-old son
Rachel Tony	43 44	30 31	Yes/6 Yes/2	3	10 year-old son 7 year-old daughter
Rose Patrick	44 35	34 25	Yes/10 Nb	1	8 year-old daughter
Jennifer Calvin	48 43	41 36	Yes/11 Nb		17, 22 year-old daughters of her previous marriage
Deborah Milton	52 39	39 26	Yes/6 Nb		21, 23 year-old daughters of her previous marriage
Elizabeth Carl	67 77	45 55	Yes/6 Yes/30		each had 2 adult children at time of their marriage

Partners' Shared World Views

Participants clearly stated their beliefs of the importance of having similar political and social outlooks on the world in having a comfortable marriage. Perhaps they differed on policy or political candidates, but they shared a commitment to equality for women. Their feminism was nested in a larger democratic liberal ideology, politically, socially, and religiously. This combination of belief in equality and a liberal ideology has been noted before in research on couples. A more politically liberal ideology tended to separate Kimball's (1983) sample of egalitarian men from traditional ones. Rachel and Tony considered themselves to be outside of the mainstream, thus their relationship provided a feeling of acceptance for them.

Rachel: I really value his political, social and religious views because I just meet so few people whose views are anywhere near mine. I mean even living in more liberal communities we are pretty far over. We are not capitalists, and we are not Christians. So, I really value that.

Dan and Barb approached having similar political views as a necessity.

Dan: it's much more pleasant to have some common beliefs about the way you approach your life and the way you expect someone else to approach their life so the two of you can mesh together.

Barb noted that she could speak her mind without the worry of having to argue every point and justify her feelings. She had, in previous relationships, kept her opinions to herself because the men she was dating would question her beliefs and stands on issues. Thus, a relationship with her husband provided intimacy with someone who respected her and her opinions.

For Miriam and Larry their similar ideology was important initially and also currently.

Larry: In order to get married to someone I had to make sure that almost all our beliefs were completely congruent.

Miriam: We were very liberal when we got married and we'd always hear that as you got older you got more conservative....what's funny is that we have found that as we got older we've actually gone further to the left. We consider ourselves almost social democrats at this point. When is this great conservative turnaround supposed to come?....We shared the same spiritual outlook and as far as we were concerned Jewish, Catholic or Buddhist was just a label. We knew what we felt was right and wrong and we knew how we would want to raise a child.

Miriam and Larry exemplified possible differences in religious traditions but they also demonstrate the more important focus couples gave to spirituality than dogma. Of the participants who discussed religion, only one pair of participants declared themselves atheists. Seven couples attended some form of organized religious services, from sporadically to weekly, or consistently read spiritual books. Two of these couples did not attend services together, and 2 couples did not attend regularly due to a conservative turn in the local congregation or minister. The religions represented were Buddhist, Christianity (Quaker, Methodist, and Episcopalian), Jewish, and Unitarian.

These participants' lives emphasized the necessity of similar world views as a basis from which a relationship that strives for equality can be developed. This

importance is revealed in how safe the women felt to criticize the gender injustice they saw and experienced in the world. Freedom to criticize was a key in the building of equality in their relationships. The importance of this ongoing critique of gender injustice will be highlighted again.

The Wedding Ceremony

Participants used the ritual of the wedding ceremony to symbolize beliefs about their relationship. Elizabeth and Carl's ceremony was a simple exchange of vows in a friend's home. They had asked the man who performed the ceremony to refrain from religious references. They assumed he did not understand their request because while the ceremony was short, it did have its share of invoking blessings from a god neither believed in. Feminism influenced participants' decision to remove offensive terms such as "obey" and "man and wife" or to disallow writings by St. Paul, as in the case of Mary and John.

John: We neutered the traditional ceremony.

Mary: And there was no Mr. & Mrs. John H.

Couples changed or revised traditional ceremonial procedures to reflect participants' beliefs of equality. Miriam and Larry described being brought to each other by their respective parents to symbolize both coming equally to each other rather than the woman being given by her father to another man. Jennifer and Calvin walked down the aisle together, preceded by her two daughters.

Jennifer: We didn't get all wound up in [traditions]. I know traditions are important for continuity and a feeling of being part of something, but I never liked the idea that the bride was the star. I just don't see that. This is a marriage of two people.

Calvin: The whole family.

Jennifer: Yeah. The whole family. That's right. So we didn't do that the regular way.

Not doing the wedding "the regular way" translated into couples infusing this ritual with new meanings, changing the content and structure of the ceremony so that they felt comfortable with what the day's activities symbolized, as Paul noted.

Paul: The service definitely had our stamp of originality. I have never seen a wedding like that before. It was fun.

Couples considered the day as a celebration of their lives and relationship, therefore they planned the day's activities together and shared the preparation as Barb and Dan did.

Barb: We were both very involved. We wrote the ceremony, we picked out the clothes...We picked the place together. We went driving around looking at places together.

The men were involved in the planning of the wedding and reception; the wedding was not considered to be only the woman's big day. Deborah and Milton married one another in a Quaker meeting which stressed the responsibility of the couple rather than a minister to perform the ceremony.

Deborah: A minister does not marry you. You stand up in meeting and make your pledges to yourself and to each other in the presence of witnesses rather than having a minister ask you the questions and you answer them. And quite literally the marriage certificate that one of the members at the Quaker meeting made for us is exactly like the ones that I have read in great number from the 1790's....We included [my daughters] in the marriage vows, so to speak, because Milton wasn't just marrying me, he was marrying the three of us in a very real sense.

Generally couples were pleased with their weddings except for Elizabeth and Carl as noted above and Rachel and Tony who disagreed about whether to have a wedding. This couple acknowledged their pattern of disagreeing, defined by Tony as "the irresistible force and the immovable object."

Rachel: Well, we got married the way that Tony wanted to. He did not want a wedding, he did not want any witnesses. He did not want a nice dress. He just wanted, to me it struck me as a denial kind of thing, he just wanted some time when he said so that we go down to city hall at some point during the day and get married. And so that is what we did.

Tony: My first wedding was kind of elaborate, more elaborate than I would have wanted, and I didn't feel like getting married that day. I always thought that was a tragedy, to get married on a day that you don't feel like it. So the point that I was advocating for was to be able to get married and not have a big elaborate thing out of it and be able to be spontaneous about it and do it sometime when we both wanted to. To me it seemed romantic and kind of nifty.

While participants' traditional ideology influenced their decision to marry, their feminist beliefs influenced how they prepared for the wedding and the ceremony itself. Traditions were altered to signify equality of the couple. The purpose of rituals, to provide continuity and a feeling of belonging as Jennifer stated, was not lost on these couples. They recognized the importance of rituals in the perpetuation of beliefs and community norms. By altering the wedding ritual to reflect their beliefs, these couples contributed to increasing the expectations for women to receive more benefits from marriage and for men to focus on the necessary work of interpersonal relationships.

Entering Marriage with Power

Feminists have made evident the differences in structural power (i.e., age, income, education, and status) between women and men, especially in the area of marriage. Women have tended to marry men who were older and better educated with more economic resources (Goldner, 1991). This disparity going into marriage sets up an imbalance between who has more power in decision making. Studies indicated that as women enter the labor force their power to define what goes on in the relationship increases (see Bernard, 1982).

The women entered their marriages with more structural power than is typically noted in research on gender differences. Husbands were no more than 3 years older except for Carl who was 10 years older than Elizabeth. However, she came to the marriage with a doctoral degree, the same job as her husband, and four years of experience. Four women were older than their husbands; 3 of these women had been married previously. Five women had more education or higher professional degrees than their husbands when marrying. This group of participants represented a variety of professions, all high status in the society. In addition, they belonged to the majority race which provided a privileged status for the women and men.

Three women currently earned more than their husbands, while another 3 women were considered to bring in as much as their husbands or the difference was insignificant. Four women earned less than their husbands. In one case, Jennifer's salary was reinvested in her business which is solely in her name. Although Sarah's husband earned more than she did, her income was steady and provided the family health care insurance. Her economic support was considered crucial for the financial well-being of the family. Mary, the only woman who was not employed, had removed herself

from the job market to increase the time spent with her children, to escape a poor work environment, and to attend to her health. At a glance it might appear that she has no viable means of supporting herself. However, she quickly stated that should she ever divorce, she could fire her husband from his present job because he worked for her parents' business and she sat on the board of directors.

The assumption of the women as the primary caretaker of the children reduced their earnings as they left the job market for a few months to a few years. Their professional salaries would allow them to survive financially and in most cases quite comfortably should they divorce, although Sarah indicated that she would be hard pressed to do so. However, the removal of women from the job market did affect the accumulation of seniority, experience, and pay raises. The equality between these women and men began to slip in terms of access to resources such as power and status outside of their marriage, which sociologists argue in turn influences power and status within their marriage (Chafetz, 1990).

Ruth addressed the importance of entering marriage after coming into her own, that is after acquiring an education, work experience, and self-knowledge.

Ruth: Well, I think I guess if you look at the traditional understanding of marriage where the man owns a woman, everything is in a man's name, the children take the father's name so that yeah, that's oppressive. But if you can think of marriage as the commitment of two equals you see what I am saying about waiting until I was thirty to get married and how awful it would have been if I had gotten married in my twenties. I met Paul at a point when I had finally come into my own, when I had found a career that I felt comfortable with, I'd found a lifestyle that I felt comfortable with, I've felt sufficient in and of myself. And I decided that even though I wanted to one day get married and have children that I might not do that and that would be okay because I enjoyed what I did, I enjoyed my work and I enjoyed my friends. I had an extended family of friends and that I would make a life for myself and make a very good and happy and fulfilling life for myself. If you have a relationship of two whole people coming together that make a commitment to nurture and support each other along life's path, what is oppressive in that?

Not all of the women in this study entered marriage with the assets mentioned by Ruth, although most entered with some of them. The notable exception is Miriam who married while she still had one year of undergraduate school to complete. She and Larry continued to pursue advanced degrees together. In the interviews she presented herself a self-assured, self-aware person with high self-esteem and her descriptions of her life reinforced this impression.

Last Names But Not the Last Word

Upon marrying, most women kept the name they had been using. Two women were exceptions. Elizabeth explained that in 1969 she had not been conscious enough of the significance of assuming a husband's name to not do it. If she had been, she would have returned to her birth name because she had been using her first husband's name up to the time of her second marriage. Miriam explained that as a child she received constant ribbing due to her last name. She liked the idea of a family having the same last name so she assumed her husband's.

Six women continued to use their birth name upon marriage. Deborah continued with her first husband's name because that was the one she was using when starting her career. Mary hyphenated her name although her husband did not because he said, "I'm too lazy." Jennifer described the last name arrangement in their home.

Jennifer: Well he certainly didn't get anybody with his name. We have three names in the family...when I got divorced I dropped my ex-husband's name and I dropped my father's name and I went back to my first and second name. My second name was my mother's father's name. And the younger of the two girls now has that same last name. We legally had her named changed. And my older daughter kept her father's name. So we have three names in the family.

Rose addressed the feminist message inherent in women not taking their husband's name and the challenge it poses to patriarchy.

Rose: We hope maybe that even the name part gives a good message to [our daughter] that her parents have separate identities yet at the same time they like each other a lot. I hope in that way we are a good role model. It sends a feminist message to people without sometimes having to say anything else or for them to know anything else about you. Once people have that one piece of information it defines at least to some extent some things about who you are. Sometimes I'm sure that's a handicap but for the most part I try to focus on also it being a benefit. At least people have some information up front in terms of deciding how they are going to deal with me in regard to being a woman because at least they know that much. I guess it is an outward sign of a way to challenge traditional sex roles, to challenge patriarchy. It is a definite statement about that and yet it really it shouldn't be hurtful to a lot of people; it's not the kind of thing you do that is going to cause a lot of other people a lot of aggravation.

Within this challenge of patriarchy is the traditional ideology of being acceptable, of not causing too much pain to others. This approach to change can be subversive, as is the revising the wedding ceremony to symbolize feminist beliefs. Change occurs through the

reclamation of an acceptable practice to take on new meanings, a sometimes slow and quiet process.

None of the men changed their name, and most said it did not bother them whatever their partners chose to do. Dan, however, admitted to some undercurrent of dissatisfaction with the decision at first. He became irritated when called by his partner's last name. She responded that she also became irritated with being called by his last name and he could always change his name if he was bothered too much. Dan responded, "I really don't have a good come back for that."

The issue of the woman's last name posed little problem for couples when compared to the decision over what to name children. The 6 couples who had children together ended up hyphenating the children's names (Mary and John's twin boys and Rachel and Tony's boy and girl) or giving the children the father's name. Miriam and Larry already shared his name so they named their son the same but also gave him his mother's birth name as a middle name. Two couples described their decision to name girls after the mother and boys after the father. However, extended family disapproved of this decision. In the case of Ruth and Paul, having a son provided an easy resolution of their decision, whereas Rose and Patrick finally changed their minds.

Rose: My mother said, "Nobody will really believe that this is Patrick's child. You will be cutting off Patrick from this child in the eyes of most of the people that she interacts with. He won't be able to claim paternity if she doesn't have his last name. That's the link she will have with him throughout her life. It will be like she is really somebody else's child and he just married you." That was my mother's view of this whole thing. I guess it was the same sort of fear of how could this hurt [our daughter]? I am willing to do what I believe is right, what I want to do, but not if it will hurt her in any way. I think my mother's argument, as much as I don't believe it is a just argument or a reasonable argument, I do believe it's how our society might deal with it. And we heard that same argument from many, many people but it was my mother talking to me about that finally convinced me. Lots of people had told us the same thing which would really be cutting off Patrick from [our daughter] in many ways in the eyes of our society.

Rose and Patrick's concern for their daughter also precluded the use of hyphenated names because they had both seen persons discriminated against who had hyphenated names. Again, the desire for social acceptance, for being part of the mainstream, is held in a dialectical tension with feminism beliefs. In discussing the tension between following her feminist beliefs and her desire to be accepted, Rachel stated:

Rachel: I have always wanted to be accepted and I have been fairly well accepted by the larger culture. I am accepted by the Junior League here, you know. We have been invited to join the predominant baptist church, the socially correct baptist church in this community. I like being accepted. I am very extroverted, and I like being a part of the group. So, I am always balancing that out. I am always in conflict with these fairly radical views that I hold and yet I don't want to isolate myself, or now my children, too much. I don't want them to be, I really think we could be in a dangerous position. This may sound a little, but you know we hold views that are very extremist views. I guess they are.

Tony: Well yeah, they don't seem that way to us.

Rachel: They seem to make sense to us. We are not Christians although I was raised by you know umpteen zillion generations of baptists.

Tony: So we are Unitarians which is not too bizarre.

And so the tension between traditional and feminist roots continued in the lives of all the participants. The decisions they made sometimes were nourished by feminism and sometimes by the dictates of society. What differed at times was the acknowledgment of how much the latter influenced their experiences of marriage and the decisions made within these relationships.

Defining Feminism in Daily Life

The participants understood feminism to be the belief in equality, a promotion of the value of women and their strengths, a means to critique messages about women and men, and a political movement dedicated to changing society for the betterment of women and men.

At a basic level all participants acknowledged a belief in the fundamental equality between women and men. This equality often was presented in a liberal feminism sense, that is women are men's equals. Liberal feminism has been criticized for an androcentric bias of presenting male as the human standard (Tong, 1989). Participants did not explicitly state this assumption that men are a standard for women to achieve, and if pressed would not agree with it. For example, six men expressed dismay over what passes as masculine and as a result felt isolated from most men. Three men specifically stated that they felt more comfortable around women than around men whom they found typically talked in ways that reinforced the idea of women as inferior. Larry and Calvin's expressions of feminism are typical of the rest of the sample.

Larry: I think to have a true good relationship you have to have an appreciation of the other person as a human being and I suppose that's the definition of feminism. The worth of a human being is not dependant upon what sex they are.

Calvin: To have the opportunities available on an equal basis. Whether that's in jobs, personal situations, raising kids, education, whatever. To be able to be treated equally and that's what I would see as the main thrust of feminism.

All participants used feminism as a lens through which they critiqued sex stereotypes, expectations of themselves and their partner, and messages about how marriage should be done.

Patrick: You know, it is such a broad topic though, the notion of feminism and the effect on everything you do and how you see the world. You could talk about it forever, I guess.

Dan discussed how feminism has taught him to challenge his stereotypes about what are appropriate jobs for men. He acknowledged that he would not feel comfortable as a nurse and wished he did not have that reaction.

Dan: That's wrong, that's that societal baggage that bothers me. I carry it, I don't know how to unload those things. You unload as much as you can but I think we're still paying for [stereotypes]. Kind of pops up on you.

Couples reported an ongoing dialogue based on their critique of messages they heard throughout the day, such as commercials that "pigeon-holed" men as incompetent and women as willing to give up their career for marriage, male friends who expressed an inability to wash clothes, or men who denigrated their wives at parties. Critiques extended to the assumption of male privilege as noted below.

Dan: They actually asked me if I, when I made my appointment with the doctor, if I minded that she was female,

Barb: But I never get ask if I minded if it was a male.

Dan: I'm in there for ulcer treatment. "What is she going to do to me? Do I got to come in and do something strange?" I thought it was a very strange question [to ask me].

Barb: That's when you become aware of it. He comes home and he goes, "they asked if I minded that I had Dr. N as my doctor because she's a she, she's a female." And I mean they didn't ask me if I minded Dr. C. being a man. That's when it becomes very evident to you. That's double standards.

Finally, feminism is a political activity. Women were by far more active in direct and overt feminist action although most of the men provided "behind the scenes" support. Three women said they had been to every major pro-choice demonstration. Seven of the women said they had attended NOW and/or conscious-raising groups in the past. Four of these women said they currently had access to a feminist group such as NOW or a study group. Two women had left very supportive feminist communities when they moved to their current location. But even after 3 years in their present location they have not found the women (Rachel) or the time (Deborah) to join. Four women have geared their careers toward helping women either through education or health care.

Men supported activism through child care while women went to marches in Washington, D. C., listened to expressions of anger and frustration at continued discrimination and violence done to women, and offered critiques of movies, books, commercials that portrayed women and men in harmful ways. Paul did not consider his feminism to be a political posture, however. He felt as though he could not make across-the-board decisions about what was always right for women because his job involved working with individual women.

In an interesting account, Tony related how he decided he was able to assume the label of feminist.

Tony: I was talking to a woman, I was director of a hotline, we were working the phones one night. This woman was telling me that she was a feminist and I probably knew what it was but hadn't discussed it with anybody. So she was describing it. And I said, "I espouse all this, can I be a feminist, too?" And she said she didn't know but she would check on it. So she told me a couple of weeks later that she had checked on it and it was okay. I think she had checked with NOW.

While men tended not to be as politically active as the women, they reported describing themselves as feminists to colleagues, co-workers, students, friends and family and thereby entering conversations about feminism and its definition. The workplace was popular among the men as a place to engage women in conversations about their lives, especially when female co-workers were feeling trapped by relationships or were expressing displeasure over doing most of the household and relationship work. When neighborhood children visited and questioned the appropriateness of Tony doing the cooking, he took the opportunity to talk about gender stereotyping.

Some participants felt rejected by feminists whom they understood questioned the feminism of heterosexual women and men. While the women responded to their felt need of being in a relationship with a man and specifically in the form of marriage, they also did not believe that they were rejecting their feminism or being less of a feminist once married. This blending of feminism and marriage was done conceptually by believing that their needs were legitimate and that their partners were dedicated to the goal of equality within the relationship. These feminists did not subscribe to a belief that women and men were incompatible, although they recognized to some extent the difficulty in blending the interests of both.

Five of the couples were familiar with some feminists who self-identify as separatists. The men felt offended by what they understood to be rejection based on their sex. Participants interpreted some feminist writings as questioning their feminism, although they also indicated some understanding of the separatist position as a way to push change. However, they were of mixed opinion whether a separatist feminism helps or hinders the acceptance of what they considered to be the more mainstream feminism.

Elizabeth: I don't go as far as Andrea Dworkin, but I don't wear rings that say you belong to somebody....I'm not stopping the radical feminists who doubt me because I'm married from going on about their business....Let them ignore me, but don't let them exclude me because to me they're mystifying their feminism.... Don't you dare leave me out!If N.O.W. became narrower and became what I perceive as the voice only of the kind of radical feminist who would leave me out, who would say that you've married shows you are flawed as a feminist, I would drop them. I'm not about to join up with something that defines me as inadequate....I like to be made conscious that we have a long way to go, but I don't like to be defined out of a group. I'm not about to continue to support a group which somehow automatically makes me the enemy.

Feminism was life-enhancing to the men, as mentioned above, so their inclusion as feminists was vital, as one man noted.

Patrick: I don't know how you can be a feminist and exclude half of humanity, for instance....To me the open mindedness associated with my notion of feminism, anyway tends to enhance a person to totally develop all parts of life.

This comparison between themselves and other feminists also occurred when some of the women said they were feminists but quickly added that they were not militant. These women and men have been sensitized to how feminism has been portrayed in the

media and therefore felt a need to distance themselves through qualifiers.

Rachel: My sense is that the public, the general impression of feminist is strident, angry, man-hating women. That at least is the culture I deal with...There's a real negative association to the term. And I'm not perceived as full of anger and bitterness and hatred and man-hating. So when I use the term it shocks people. It's cognitive dissonance for them.

The women who went to marches for reproductive rights distanced themselves from the label "militant feminists." Barb gave some indication of what she considered to be militant feminists: those who change words such as "history" to "herstory" and "chairman" to "chairperson." Otherwise it was unclear what participants meant by militant, except for perhaps an element of vocalized anger. All of the women worried about how they were perceived as feminists in some sense. For some it was a question of being effective in the classroom or not alienating administrators. Elizabeth termed this type of feminist "a white glove feminist," one who seeks to "catch more flies with honey than vinegar." This approach matched their desire to be accepted, but it was an acceptance connected with their desire to make change, a desire that is subversive. The women lived under an awareness of needing to be accepted before being heard.

Oppression Considered

This section traces the tension between the choice of marriage and feminist beliefs as it arose in couple's lives. Marriage signified for these participants a practical resolution to being together, being accepted by others, and meeting personal needs for commitment while feminism signified a means by which participants could make sense of the gender injustices they saw and experienced. The application of the feminist critique to marriage produced a recognition of the theoretical possibility of marriage being oppressive to women but not the conclusion that their own relationships were oppressive. What they described rather were moments of subordination as well as moments of empowerment.

Participants said women did not experience oppression within their marriages; however, some described choices that placed women's well-being in a subordinated position. What accounts for this discrepancy? Some ideas are proposed as ways to make sense of the complexity of people's lives. First, the belief that oppression has to be intended rather than unintended could have blocked couples from seeing male domination

and privilege. The men involved in this study were committed to equality and did not seek to dominate. However, as will be addressed, subordination of women occurred through the evocation of personality differences, the reduction of primary parenting to essential differences between women and men, and through episodes of violence. Hare-Mustin (1991) proposed that domination that is unintended and unsought and looks reasonable still functions as domination with obvious consequences.

Another reason for the discrepancy between what was believed and what was described could be due to the topic, feminists and marriage. The topic could have stifled any admission of feelings of oppression on the part of the women who may have feared that their feminism was being questioned, a particularly daunting worry given that I am a woman and a feminist. I could have colluded in the silence by asking women and men to speak but not to speak the "unspoken" (Allen & Baber, 1992, p. 11); that is, to present marriage as empowering for women and not as oppressive. A third reason could be denial, the desire not to acknowledge something very painful, something that if acknowledged eventually could lead to the disintegration of the marriage. Such a possibility could have been too difficult to deal with, given the constraints people lived with that limited their options.

Others reasons could account for the belief that marriage was not oppressive to themselves or to their partners. The participants, especially women, experienced more discrimination from others outside of the marriage than inside it. Thus, by comparison they felt lucky to be married to someone who was not like most of the men they heard about or knew. In a world that is already structured toward male privilege, a marriage with a man who has a similar world view and expresses beliefs of equality and acts on them to some degree may feel very empowering and not like the typical experiences of oppression at all. Finally, in comparison to previous marriages or marriages of family members and friends, these participants' marriages seemed very different. People commented on how strong and supportive the couples' marriages appeared, although they may have questioned the couples' sensibilities for having different names, separate recreational interests, or friends of the other sex.

What follows is a discussion of participants' beliefs about oppression and marriage and then a description of moments of subordination and moments of empowerment. Moments of female subordination and male domination in the form of evoking personality

differences as a way to explain inequality, essentializing differences between women and men as a way to explain primary parenting by women, and enacting violence will be explored.

Marriage Can Be Oppressive. Theoretically

Participants did not consider marriage to be inherently oppressive to women or to men although they believed that it was possible and probably was the norm. All of them had seen marriages that were oppressive such as those of parents and friends. They admitted that marriage puts an extra burden on women, but some quickly added that it is oppressive to men too. The oppressive nature of marriage was discussed in terms of admitting the theoretical possibility but not agreeing that as an institution marriage is only and always oppressive to women. This opinion is understandable given their marital status, but also understandable after hearing many couple's stories; stories of feminists reclaiming marriage. The feminists of this study have embraced marriage as part of the landscape worth salvaging, but for personal need, not for the cause of feminism. This individual nature of marriage speaks to where women live: day to day within relationships, with people they nurture and love and who love and nurture them.

They risked particularizing their lives, believing to be personal and individual what is shared and part of a larger social structure. Knowledge of the feminist critique of marriage empowered women to choose men who were sympathetic to feminism. What resulted in these marriages was an ongoing vigilance for equality, sometimes an orchestrated effort, sometimes a struggle. "Feminism is about options," "feminism is about choice," was reiterated over and over again throughout the lives of these participants. The choice was seen as moving toward something better than what traditional marriage offered, although they were not out to demonstrate the viability of marriage to or for anyone, feminists or nonfeminists. The marriages of these feminists looked different from and at times still similar to the marriages in which women are oppressed; however, labeling any of these marriages as oppressive does not reflect their complexity nor the agency, the ability to act and use resources (Miller, 1976), women felt they had and were using. Therefore, a postmodern analysis leads to the examination, the deconstruction and reconstruction of what the term oppression means in the lives of feminists who are married (Allen & Baber, 1992). In the next sections the discussion of oppression is enlarged to include participants' experiences of oppression as located

outside of marriage, as internal expectations, and between partners.

Oppression as Cultural and Social Mandates

Participants experienced oppression in terms of cultural and social mandates about how married women and men should act. Often these mandates took the subtle form of questions or red tape, asking participants to do something they disliked or that signified a gender arrangement with which they disagreed. For example, when Jennifer went to acquire a lease for her own business, the store owner inappropriately requested that her husband also sign the lease even though he was not part of the business. At the end of recounting this story, Jennifer concluded:

Jennifer: It's preposterous. I mean that's the kind of stuff that's preposterous. That's the oppression. Not our relationship.

Elizabeth, the one participant who believed marriage was "innately oppressive," also chose to marry as an acknowledgement of living in the real world, a practical decision. Her utopian vision expressed below did not invalidate her own choice of marriage due to the cultural and historical constraints facing her.

Karen: Do you believe marriage is inherently oppressive to women?

Elizabeth: Yes, I do. I certainly do. Marriage as known in the western world. And if I could just rebuild the world, if I were the goddess, there would be no marriage. In fact, there would be androgyny. I mean there wouldn't even be practically required heterosexuality. But I live in the real world with salaries and life insurance.

This "living in the real world" constrained participants' choices when enacting a relationship based on the premise of equality. For example, although couples may have wanted to share parenting, one parent had to maintain a full time job in order for the family to have medical benefits, or one parent's job allowed part-time work while the other did not. Therefore, couples engaged in a recursive process of combining or accommodating their decisions based on feminist beliefs with the constraints posed in a society which, although including people with feminist beliefs, still fails to incorporate a total feminist agenda in its policies and practices.

A woman's own name was considered extremely important in making a statement about how the marriage was structured and how partners thought about each other.

Jennifer: Being married is not oppressive to me. But part of that is, I'm not Mrs. E. I'm not his possession. And I see having his name as being his possession. He's not Mr.T. He's not my possession.

But again, the choice to have different names was attacked by family and others. Two in-laws and even in one case a woman's own parents sent mail addressed to Mrs. Husband's Last Name. Upon learning she did not take her husband's name, Rose's students commented that they would not do that because they planned on staying married. Comments such as these sparked feelings of defensiveness, and it was this feeling of requiring to defend choices and their lifestyle that felt oppressive to people, especially to men who have enjoyed the privilege of being normative within society. Thus, a tension arose when a man felt too different or too tired of defending his positions. Dan practiced what could be called a defensive strategy toward inquiring people by not using his wife's last name at times when introducing her in the attempt to hold off questions. This defensive strategy could be a response that arises for men when they are feeling the pull to fit the traditional construction of a man. The messages they received through comments such as, "You sure have a strong-willed wife," and questions, "You're a feminist?" can be interpreted as "don't change" orders. In this way then, men too were responding to a need to be accepted.

Most couples contended with salespersons talking only to the husband when they looked at cars or computers and only to the wife when buying household appliances. These expectations were considered annoyances or hindrances, not necessarily oppressive. The use of humor and criticism of such attitudes functioned as coping mechanisms to deal with these intrusions into the lives of the partners. Having different names served as a screening device for telephone calls, identifying solicitors who used Mrs. Husband's Last Name or Mr. Wife's Last Name. People legitimately responded, "No one by that name lives here."

When the encounter was of importance to the woman's economic well being or participants felt the need to defend their marriage arrangement to extended family then they felt oppressed by these annoyances or intrusions into their lives. The structure of work, of needing one partner to work full time limited these couples' relationship arrangements and for some felt oppressive. Thus, they talked about doing the best they could given the constraints of needing to earn money.

Rachel acknowledged that her marriage to Tony was hard, due in large measure to their disagreements over lifestyle and division of work around the house and parenting responsibilities. Given these difficulties, she still maintained that one blanket statement about marriage mystifies rather than clarifies what marriage is for women.

Rachel: It has been oppressive to women, it's been empowering to women. It has been a lot of things to women. It's not unidimensional to me. It has been oppressive to men. Look at all these men that have thought they had to go out and support four people for thirty years and that their value as a human being was what kind of car they drove and how big their house was. I mean that's pretty oppressive....So it is just not that simple to me, you know. A lot of things are oppressive: the educational system is oppressive, the political system is oppressive. But you do the best you can with it, and you make it work the best you can.

Oppression as Internal Expectations

Oppression was also experienced on an internal, personal level by participants in the form of expectations of what women and men should do in marriage. These gender expectations, or "baggage," often were in the form of expecting men to care for the car or to know how to fix things around the house and expecting women to work outside of the home and be aware of the status of household tasks.

Rachel: I think any oppression I felt in marriage came more from my own notions than from him. Vestiges of thoughts that the husband does this and the wife does that. And they would be pre-verbal kinds of thoughts. When I would actually dredge them up and verbalize them and look at them they'd be inconsistent with my stated views. It's all of those role images that you have internalized from your models. The main one for me was that the male is very attentive to the female and very helpful in little ways, doing little chores, menial little things like polishing my shoes and getting little things straight for me and seeing that my car is in order.

Paul noted that feminism specifically influenced his marriage in the identification of gender expectations.

Paul: Dropping the assumptions that someone would do a particular task because they are male or female, and I tweak Ruth on that sometimes. She expects me to put oil in the car all the time. I want her to know how to put oil in the car. It is not something I think about everyday and wake up and say what can I do today that is feminist sensitive. It underlies the whole lifestyle, I think, primarily in trying to drop the gender specific expectations about what gets done.

Elizabeth, who considered marriage to be "innately oppressive to women," also stated her belief that through hard work a couple could create a partnership marriage. Feminism emphasized the development of autonomy for women, as Elizabeth explained.

Elizabeth: Feminism is basically highly conscious of autonomy and a person's potential for self development....Feminism has helped our marriage because it has made us think through issues of autonomy and balancing.

Participants' feminist beliefs aided them in the identification of gender expectations. All of the couples reviewed ways in which they were not following traditional allotments of household and relationship tasks. With two exceptions, the men cooked meals as part of their responsibilities around the house. For five of the men this was a daily task. For Dan, Shawn, and Tony this task was either shared with their wives or they ate out a lot. John, often coming home late in the evening from work, fixed his own food, and Rob did not cook as part of his household tasks. It is interesting to note that cooking has been rated by spouses as one of the better household jobs to do, second to child care but more desirable than shopping, cleaning, or doing laundry (Okin, 1989).

I Am Not Oppressed By My Partner

The feminist critique has revealed the oppressive nature of marriage for women, that women pay a higher cost to be in marriage than men, that male privilege in society in general recurs on an interpersonal level in marriage, and that women's self-interests are subordinated in marriage. Feminism also has empowered women by presenting an interpretation of the world that acknowledges women's experiences of injustice, subordination, and discrimination so that women can make sense of what has happened and is happening to them and resist it. The feminist tenet "the personal is political" sums up the understanding that what women experience in their individual lives is a reflection of what happens to women as a group, and the group, sisterhood, offers the collective means of making change for women's individual lives.

The women in this study portrayed a strong sense of personal agency, a belief that they could make marriage into a relationship that was based on equality and a balance of power with their husbands. The darker side of this belief in individual agency is the potential of concluding that problems in a marriage result from individual failure rather than any problems with the institution itself. This understanding of agency stems

from a liberal/humanist tradition that emphasizes the freedom of individuals to determine their fate while it renders invisible the social forces and constructions that limit choices and opportunities (Hare-Mustin, 1991; Tong, 1989).

Participants reported experiencing their marriages as an empowering relationship, not one in which one partner oppressed the other. Participants were able to acquire degrees, start businesses, pursue artistic goals, and advance in their careers. Ruth, who married at age 30 after "coming into my own," viewed marriage as a base to continue her growth as an individual.

Ruth: I don't see marriage as oppressive at all...I see the freedom of commitment. I would only feel free to be myself with the understanding that I have a commitment... You gotta have your space but why can't you have it within the context of a committed relationship where you are loved regardless of where you grow and where you go and that you support that other person?...Marriage is a commitment to share a life with and nurture somebody else. It involves a give and take and, yeah, I can't have everything but I can have a lot. Life is making choices and so I don't see it as oppressive; I see it as liberating.

While the theoretical possibility of the oppressive nature of marriage was acknowledged by participants, they focused on what they considered to be the flexible nature of marriage, responding to participants' needs for different types of relationships. For Miriam marriage accommodated the completion of undergraduate school, graduate school, relocating from the northeast to the middle Atlantic region, and having a baby. All along she did not feel the need to fight for equality in her marriage; rather, the fight was focused at her jobs where she earned less than men.

Miriam: Well marriage is such a flexible institution... that you can mold marriage to fit feminist ideals.

Some couples shared much of their daily lives, not only family life but also work. They presented workshops together or assisted each other with their respective jobs. Other couples liked to have definite separate lives and overlap at home.

The choice of partner was vital to consider one's marriage as nonoppressive, being able to feel free to be oneself. Marrying a particular person could protect women from oppression by choosing men who would not make requests that went against what the women wanted to do. The identification of the men with feminism indicated their willingness to strive for equality in the relationship. This belief emphasized the

personal agency women felt they had. The quotes below from two women address the need to choose a partner wisely.

Jennifer: I don't think that marriage is oppressive. I think society is oppressive to women. I think single women have different kinds of oppression. And I do think it has to do with who is in the marriage with you because being married to Calvin I am able to be who I really am. I wasn't able to be who I really was in my first marriage. But then, I hadn't learned to value myself at that point, I don't think. And I definitely was not valued by my ex-husband. And so I really feel it has to do with the two people in it. I saw myself as a feminist then but I allowed things to happen which negated me.

Rose: Life is just so much richer having Patrick in it.... [It] amazed me that it really could be, that he could be the kind of person he is. Patrick is truly a good person, a just person.

Women entered marriage more knowledgeable about potential problems, for their own safety and well-being, than the men. What is revealed is an underlying belief that unless guarded against, marriage will be oppressive, as Barb noted.

Barb: I think being married can be oppressive, if you let it.

Patrick spoke to the structural inequalities between women and men when divorcing.

Patrick: [If the marriage] breaks up then the woman is the one who is really shackled, not the man. Yeah, if I were a woman, I would have a much different outlook on life absolutely. I think I would be a lot more cynical. I think I would be a lot more wary.

The couples' shying away from the term *oppression* as applying to their marriages could be accounted for by the reasons stated in the opening of this section. However, another reason could be considered. The term *oppressive* connotes an overall judgment, a categorization that does not reflect their lived experiences. Couples' descriptions tell of a mixture of experiences, some that do subordinate women's well-being to their husband's and some that empower women. The term *moment* is used in the next section to signify the instances in which women experience subordination or empowerment and the ongoing possibilities of having experiences of either kind. Given the larger context of male privilege in which women lived, no marriage was totally empowering; given women's agency and their partners' identification with feminism, no marriage was totally oppressive.

Moving Toward Empowerment

Rather than mystifying these couples' experiences and labeling marriage oppressive by default due to the encompassing patriarchy, this analysis seeks to emphasize the interdependence between people and environment (Vannoy-Hiller & Philliber, 1989). That is, individuals and couples can carry out their desires of equality to some extent. Sometimes these couples were blocked by their socialization which they were in the process of changing and by societal constraints which they critiqued and fought against. Feminism is ultimately concerned with changing women's lives, and part of that process is noting successful attempts. These couples demonstrated ways in which women were empowered in marriage.

Moments of Subordination/Moments of Empowerment

Three situations that feminist critiques have demonstrated as being unequal or harmful to women occurred with some of these couples: physical violence, an unfair division of household tasks, and women as the primary parents. Some couples did not find these areas a struggle, rather they consistently assessed the distribution of the workload which they considered to be equal due to their vigilance. These three situations are reviewed to highlight some instances of subordination as well as empowerment. The last section of this chapter reviews a process of communication employed by these couples to build equality between the partners.

Violence. Feminist critiques say that violence is an indication of male domination, revealing the inequality and oppressive nature of relationship (Yllo & Bograd, 1988). Kelly (1988) used the word "continuum" of violence to highlight the range of behavior that can be considered harmful to women, including verbal threats and threatening behaviors. This concept guided the interpretation of violence for this study, along with Adams' (1988) definition that includes any intimidating acts that may or may not include physical contact.

In two cases, the husbands described incidences of violence that the wives did not. John said that prior to their marriage he threw a chair at Mary. Before their boys were born 8 years ago, they had slapped each other on three or four occasions. Since the boys were born they have had loud fights, usually because Mary's felt unappreciated, during

which one or the other has walked out but physical violence has not occurred.

In the other case, Milton described shaking Deborah three or four times, the last time being a few years ago. He also described a recent event of pushing lots of paperwork off their table in anger. As a result of these episodes he believed that Deborah did not feel physically safe in their relationship, and he was attempting to remedy that by reassurance and learning to identify his anger and choose alternative outlets. Deborah said she felt emotionally unsafe with her husband; however, she mentioned Milton's emotional shutdown rather than the violence as a reason.

In one case a woman described violence whereas the man did not. Rachel described an event about one and a half years ago in which she and her husband were arguing and he had blocked the door so she could not leave. She had threatened to call the police if he did not move. At that point he ripped the phones out of the wall. Rachel said that prior to that time she had never felt scared of her husband. This incident motivated them to go to 15 months of marital therapy although they had planned on going for other reasons before this episode.

In the first two cases, the men admitted to violent behaviors and their inappropriateness and assumed some level of responsibility to control their behaviors. In the third case, Tony talked in his individual interview about being aware of how his physical behaviors can be intimidating and his responsibility for controlling his expressions. Rachel considered Tony's violence as an anomaly, incongruent with his gentleness demonstrated throughout many years of their relationship. Overall, these men were in an ongoing process of monitoring themselves and were open to correcting their behaviors.

The reasons offered at the beginning of this section as to why these women did not label their marriages oppressive can apply here. In addition, perhaps they did not define these episodes as violent because they "forgot," "minimized" (Kelly, 1988), or compared what they experienced to descriptions of violence told by others. These women have had jobs in which they would have been aware of what extensive violence looks like in the lives of women. It is assumed that in the third case embarrassment prevented the man from disclosing his actions because it appeared they were considered dangerous enough to prompt seeking help.

Participants told of the following incidents when asked about violence occurring in

their relationships. They are included here to acknowledge the type and range of behavior that was reported when partners responded to questions about violence in their relationships. Participants offered these reports but these incidents did not result in the partners becoming scared or frightened.

Rachel mentioned that early on in their marriage she had broken a wine bottle and a window in their house. Barb said the only item that has ever been thrown in their home has been the remote control for the television which she threw across the room. Miriam stated that due to Larry's Buddhist training, he disliked her throwing down the newspaper in disgust over news articles which she did at times to demonstrate her frustration. Both Ruth and Paul in their individual interviews told about Paul's hitting a hallway wall with his fist. It occurred in the middle of the night when Paul was trying to get his five-year-old son, who wanted his mother instead of his father, back to sleep. Paul was unable to quiet his son and in frustration left the room and hit the wall.

In telling these incidents of violence, participants demonstrated their sensitivity to the range of violence that is possible in relationships and the pervasiveness of behaviors done in frustration and anger.

Parenting. The struggle presented here is one over having the fathers equally share parenting rather than getting distant fathers involved with their children. These fathers were very involved with their children when compared to typical fathers, as the couples noted. Even the stepfathers, who thought of themselves as fathers, were highly involved in their children's lives emotionally and more so than the children's biological fathers. The most emotionally distant father was John who was working at his wife's family business and going to school in order to assume management of the business. However, he participated in his sons' baseball practices and games and cub scouts, cared for them when his wife was involved pursuing her artistic career, and took them to the doctor's office and with him on errands. Mary, his wife, admitted that she did the emotional nurturing of the boys but added that John provided an example of respect for women. For instance, this respect took the form of having a female doctor for himself and the boys because he considered her the best choice medically.

When the women compared their husbands' parenting responsibilities to their own, they recognized discrepancies. Few couples managed to grow in the direction of shared

parenting, a 50/50 division of caretaking of their children. All but two women, Rose and Miriam, had the primary care of their children as babies. Except for the women who remarried who had children and Rose whose husband Patrick cared for their baby during the day while she was at work, all of the women evoked a specialness about being a mother to explain the extra time they spent with their children when compared to their husbands.

The "marriage between equals discourse" highlights the use of deferring to essential differences between women and men and the reasonableness of the decision to justify inequalities (Hare-Mustin, 1991). Participants used this discourse when explaining how the greater parenting load went to mothers. For Sarah and Shawn, their time with the children was equal when they were working an equal amount of hours at their jobs. However, Shawn was spending more time at work trying to keep his small business afloat and to bring in necessary money. Sarah, who convinced her employer to give her 4 months' maternity leave versus the standard 6 weeks, was the one who quit her job and stayed home with their son when he developed medical problems. Their decision appeared to have been based on economic reasons because Shawn made more money. Sarah is now back to work after having a second child. Both of them said they would like to stay home because they love being with their children and for Shawn that also signified the freedom to take up writing again. While Sarah was pleased with the amount of involvement Shawn has with their children, she also was aware of differences in overall responsibility: she kept track of school registration times, birthday presents, and appointments. In this case, Shawn referred to Sarah's natural ability to be more organized than he. Although Sarah agreed with this she did not like it and so continued to press Shawn into taking responsibility. Nevertheless, she still had to direct him to what needed doing.

Rachel and Tony's story of parenting sound similar to Sarah's and Shawn's except that Rachel had worked part time until the past two years. Rachel stated that she did not find marriage oppressive because she was not responsible for her husband but that she did find parenthood oppressive because of the responsibility for the children, which she did not believe was divided equally.

Ruth believed that the combination of biology (pregnancy and breast feeding), social structure (laws and job requirements), and socialization resulted in her being

their son's primary caretaker. She and Paul agreed to do shared parenting before their son was born. However, breast-feeding and her own desire to be with her baby along with Paul's feeling less comfortable with the baby and the full-time requirement of his job soon moved the couple into a more typical scenario of mother being the primary caretaker. However, a typical week at their house would show Paul caring for their son on his day off while Ruth worked, going to his son's school once a week to visit, and meeting the school bus at noon and taking their son to daycare on the days that both he and Ruth worked. Ruth has a professional skill that pays part-time about what her husband makes full-time, thus she has flexibility in blending career and parenting. Of course she was losing seniority and social security benefits but she did not consider that to be important when compared to caring for her child. Ruth, who read feminism literature extensively, explained why she slowed down her career to part-time to care for her son.

Ruth: I know in feminist teaching so much value is placed on being, as opposed to external power, a masculine understanding of power being control. The feminist values so much more the being and self-actualization....Seeking external status financially in the career world is a masculine view of control over others; that is a selling out of the real power. I understand that tension there if you don't have that financial power you don't have that choice, so it is a tension but I see myself as a post-feminist. I don't need to prove that I can do it in the outside world; it is enough knowing I have a choice and I can really choose what is important, which is being a mother.

Paul explained that he does not feel completely comfortable with his son and has found himself staying longer at work sometimes, as his father did before him, rather than coming home to a child. Men's socialization to be less nurturing worked against this couple's desire for shared parenting. Upon having twins, Mary "found out" that she was the more nurturing parent, like most of the other women in this study. For example, Ruth's choice of work, health care, and her willingness to read about parenting helped to make her more prepared for parenting than her husband was. She was quite clear that she chose to stay with her son and work part-time because she valued parenting, not as a response to what her husband did or did not choose to do in terms of parenting.

Their socialization also resulted in different levels of concern for their relationship as Paul noted when he explained that Ruth was more focused on their marriage than he was.

Paul: I think guys are just less reflective and I don't want to take refuge in that and say I'm a guy so I don't have to think about it as much but on the other hand I don't force myself to think about things that I should be thinking about. I am aware of the difference.

Ruth and Paul exemplified a relationship form that can result from the blending of feminist and conservative roots. Both were quite clear about creating a relationship different from a traditional nuclear family. A quick glance at their arrangement might lead to an erroneous conclusion of a traditional arrangement. But as was mentioned above, the involvement of Paul in his child's life is not traditional, nor is Ruth's motivation to be a mother derived from a lack of other options in her life. It is her understanding of feminism, its valuing of mothering, that informed her decision to place the career of motherhood ahead of her professional career during her son's early years.

In addition to Rose and Patrick, Miriam and Larry exhibited the greatest degree of shared parenting even though time was not equally divided while Miriam was home part time. Miriam took 4 months' maternity leave and then returned to work part time. The interviews with this couple took place just before Miriam was returning to work full time after almost 5 months of part-time work. Miriam cared for the baby until 1 pm at which time she dropped him off at daycare. At 3:30 pm Larry picked him up and cared for him until 6:30 pm at which time both parents shared caretaking. They both felt as though they were the primary caretakers of their son, but Miriam certainly cared for him more hours. They were at a decision point for parenting. Their son was showing, or so Larry thought, a preference for Miriam to do the night time routine, a process that took at least one hour.

Larry: I think that bothers Miriam a little bit. It's by default she ended up being the nighttime ritual.

Miriam: No, no it's just sometimes I need a break. I mean sometimes...

Larry: I'm always willing to give you a break.

Miriam: Yeah, but when you say, 'Okay, I'll give you a break,' it's like, "Okay, I'll take over for you on this one job." It's the thing I always objected when men say, "Let me help you."

Larry: It sounds like that's your job.

Miriam: Your job and I'm assisting you and that's not the way it's supposed to be. So, I'll do it tonight is, "Okay, I'm giving you a break tonight, but let's remember whose job this really is." I mean, if I need a break it's not, "Okay, I'll give you a break." It's, "Let daddy be the nurturer tonight."

Karen: Are you working to change that?

Larry: Yeah, we're aware of it.

Miriam: We're aware of it but I don't know how much we can change it because if [our son] prefers me to do it but...that's the way it is. I'm not blaming Larry for it. I'm not blaming me. I don't think it's a problem with our relationship.

In response to the draft of chapter four, Miriam sent a letter explaining what she and Larry had decided about the night-time routine. She gives her son his bath, reads stories, and puts him to bed. Meanwhile, Larry does the dinner dishes and straightens the living room. Once every week or two they switch for an evening. She reported that they are happy with this arrangement which is "fair and equitable."

Barb and Dan also were at a transitional point at the time of their interviews. When they married neither wanted children, but recently Dan had changed his mind. Barb felt pressure not to keep parenthood from her husband who is "so good with kids and he likes kids." She also feared that in 10 years he could divorce her to marry a younger woman and have children. Dan stated he would never divorce for that reason, that the marriage was more important than children. However, Barb recognized the imbalance that exists between women and men in terms of greater value placed on women able to bear children and the risk of losing an intimate partner should the woman not go along with social mandates to produce children.

Barb: We've talked about it. I'm becoming paranoid of him. Is he going to turn 45 years-old and say, "Well, I really want kids, and you didn't. Now you're too old anyway. I'm going to find some young woman who want to have kids. I regret that I didn't and it's too late for you." He tells me that won't happen, but I have to admit I'm paranoid about it.

This couple's future is unclear. Dan believed that having a child required joint parenting, not one parent taking over the child rearing. Barb described an arrangement where Dan would "basically take care of" the baby while she went to graduate school. They both recognized that they would stay home more, which was a benefit to Dan who described himself as more of a homebody than Barb, who liked to go out most nights.

Given the pressure Barb felt due to societal prescriptions, how much of a choice is this for Barb? People do not ask couples why they are having children; rather, people ask women why are they not having children. Barb experienced this subtle pressure throughout the five years of her marriage. If Barb decides to have a baby, will Dan assume caregiving so that Barb can pursue a master's degree? The tendency, as the other couples demonstrated, is for the woman to have the greater responsibilities as a parent while job and personality differences are brought up to explain the difference.

Developmentalists and therapists are urging fathers to share parenting responsibilities so their children can learn that nurturing and caretaking are not determined by biology (Chodorow, 1978; Rubin, 1983). Family practitioners are urging women to stay in the workforce for their own and their children's economic well-being (Okin, 1989; Dorinbusch & Strober, 1988). Men who have done shared parenting urge other fathers to do it for emotional well-being (Ehrensaft, 1990). Rose and Patrick and Miriam and Larry have been able either to do shared parenting or to approximate it. The other four couples tried to involve the fathers as much as possible, although structural and socialization reasons prevented shared parenting. However unintended the fathers' decreased involvement with their children, the consequences are real. Women, not men, slow down their careers, putting their ability to care for themselves economically at risk. When compared to other women, the women in this study certainly have a much greater chance of surviving economically due to their level of education. But when compared to their husbands, these women slipped in earnings and job longevity as they assumed a greater portion of the parenting responsibilities.

Household tasks. The word *struggle* describes the pull and tug that was apparent in the couples in which at least one person felt unfairly burdened with domestic work and changes in the arrangement were not forthcoming. The "marriage between equals discourse" reveals the reliance on personality differences as an explanation for power differences. For seven couples, domestic chores appeared to be more of the woman's responsibility even if was to arrange the time for the cleaning service to come. Five men used the personality of the women as a reason why they ended up with the major household responsibility: "she has a higher standard," "she's more fussy," "she's the more organized person." In these marriages women tried at some point to equalize

the workload but this attempt was labeled as "nagging," and thus dismissed, or the 50/50 agreement "could never get started" and a cleaning service was called in. The workloads did not even out. These interactions exemplify male privilege; the men decided to what extent they participated in adult responsibilities around the house (Ferree, 1990; Okin, 1989).

Sarah's chief complaint was the distribution of domestic responsibility. She definitely identified this struggle in terms of gender.

Sarah: Men, so far as the planning and managing of [domestic responsibilities], they are out of tune. That is where they have failed the greatest as far as I'm concerned. And I have had that argument with Shawn since I was working the first time when [our son] was born. You really feel it with the children 'cause you have to have a meal on the table when you come home. It is not like you can not have anything in the fridge. You have to plan more and you have to do it so it is there on time. So it is more intensified when you have children but I have always had that complaint and so again a lot of it was me [telling him he needed to take on more responsibility]. All right, you are going to cook two nights a week and not only that, you are going to know what we are going to have for dinner and not only that, you are going to do the grocery shopping for it. You see what it gets down to? So he calls at 4:30 and says, "What do you want for dinner?" putting it back on me.

Karen: What do you do?

Sarah: "I don't know. You decide, good bye. But figure it out, figure it out for yourself."

Rachel had a similar complaint. She never felt as though she had a partner in the running of the home.

Rachel: I was disappointed, I felt ripped off. He didn't do fifty percent of the housework....His position was this was more important to me than it was to him. Not because I was the woman and he was the man or I was the wife, but just because it was....He maintains that a lot of this stuff is totally unimportant to him, that he doesn't care if the bills are paid....It seems to me that it's a cop out for him to just say "Well I don't care about these things so you do them all if you want them done." I think he certainly benefits a lot...I don't think our degree of commitment to those menial tasks is consistent with the degree to which they are important.

In this case the worry that "feminism will free men first" is applicable. Rachel's husband, Tony, did not believe in gender expectations about what he should do around the house, but rather maintained that no one should do the work. Again, the reliance on

personality differences conceals the inequality in this arrangement.

Deborah and Milton explained that their division of household responsibilities was such that Milton has the heaviest load. Her career was considered the primary one and has determined two major moves for them in the past five years. Milton has not found his professional niche yet and expressed displeasure over having to wait so long to build his career, only to find the area where they currently were living lean on opportunities for him. He was returning to school to acquire another degree but also was frustrated at the length of time it was taking. Meanwhile, Deborah expressed feeling overwhelmed at being the primary breadwinner with not enough time to give to household tasks and to Milton.

Rose, in describing her marriage with which she felt so pleased, said one reason they have such a wonderful relationship was due to being married to a person who functioned as another adult in the home by doing his share of the work.

Rose: I think about Patrick as another responsible partner, an equal person in carrying out this relationship. As I look back on the other marriage, I saw myself as an adult taking care of this relationship. So I've been continually surprised that Patrick also takes care of things. For the first several years, the first couple of years especially, I was continually surprised at what it was like to live with another adult who was also responsible for the work of the home. I think because we both do a lot of the same things that I would think that we have an appreciation [of each other]. I hope I appreciate all the contributions he makes and I feel that he has a pretty good picture of what's going on. I think there are people who participate in families who don't have much of an idea about what the other person is doing or what's happening to them. I don't think that's the case with Patrick because he's in there doing it too, maybe in his own way or with his own tasks, but I think he has a pretty good appreciation of the sacrifices as well as the benefits and blessings of it. So I feel like he knows pretty much what I put into it. I feel like, that's one thing that I feel like he is so, he is such a good contributor that I don't want to take that for granted. I guess I want to be looking out for him too. He's getting lots of good stuff back out of this [relationship]. I think he puts a lot into it. I think he puts a lot into our relationship.

Building Equality

According to participants' accounts of their relationships, equality is developed by a process that is carried out through communication. But just talking with one another is not enough. This process involved an interplay of the following components: a vigilance or a monitoring of the status of equality; a willingness to change unhelpful communication patterns; the marriage as a safe place in which to feel emotionally

vulnerable; and an active participation of both partners, especially the men, in critiquing gender injustice. A goal of equality in the relationship was understood either implicitly or established through explicit discussions. Communication was highlighted as the key to ensuring equality. Every couple mentioned the importance of communication in their marriages either through the presence of it or the lack of it as Dan and Barb emphasized their interviews.

Dan: One thing I can say for us, we talk.

Barb: We value the ability to talk to each other. We talk to each other. We really don't seem to have a communication problem, you know. If I'm pissed off at him, I'll tell him. If he's pissed off at me, he will usually tell me. Except he's worse at that, he keeps a lot of things inside. But, we definitely value that part of our relationship, that we can talk to each other. I know we do because that's extremely important.

Larry came from a tradition of talking among family members and carried this over into his marriage with Miriam who enjoyed *nergling* too.

Larry: We can't do anything without talking about it. And the smallest thing, I mean we keep going over and over it. Not because it bothers us, because we turn it over, that's the kind of people we are....My mother and father have made a word, *nergle*, just turn it over and over.

By examining this communication process, the way in which these couples attempt to establish equality can be identified. In the next four sections, relationship moments of empowerment are highlighted through looking at the process of vigilance, changing poor communication patterns, building emotional intimacy, and critiquing gender injustice.

The price of equality is eternal vigilance. The vigilance that began before marriage for women in the wise choice of a partner continued in the marriage and now included the men. Communication functioned as a cutting tool, pruning the sprouts of inequality. A sense of vigilance, a constant monitoring or awareness was required, although the couples who were successful in this process did not experience it as a struggle between themselves, as Miriam pointed out in her individual interview.

Miriam: Your questions always raise, I think, the presumption in that there's a conscious effort that we have to work at meshing feminism and marriage and I don't think we ever have. Since we were feminists before we got married, it's just who we are and it didn't need to be worked on. It didn't need to have a conscious effort of meshing it. That's the way it works. If he came out with a wildly unfeminist statement like, 'What is it these women want? Why aren't they happy with the pay they're getting? Why do they want to take over a man's job?' I'd look at him and say, "Who are you? You're not the guy I married." So it meshes because that's what we worked for to begin with in the marriage, so it doesn't take any conscious effort to mesh it....Well, you just mold your marriage in that we're equal partners and you know, "I'm not going to take any shit from you just because I'm a woman and you're the man."

The vigilance required to maintain equality was a combined effort with some leeway for the partners to identify and correct imbalances, as noted below by Patrick.

Patrick: I think it is really possible [to have equality or a nonoppressive marriage] but it is not something that sort of happens and you say "Zap, now we got it" and you go on. But you have to constantly communicate and sometimes it swings a little bit more toward the other. It is this fluid thing, it is just not static. You just don't say, "Well, we are feminists now so therefore our marriage is equal, and I won't physically hurt or verbally abuse you and so therefore we have equality in our marriage" and everything is hunky dory after that. I think without constant communication the notion of equality probably can't exist....You have to ensure that equality maintains itself. I am convinced that having a sense of equality about the marriage, that the notion that both of you have equal say about what's going in decisions makes for a better marriage and a better life.

Like Patrick, Miriam addressed the vigilance necessary to maintain equality. She also introduced the idea of different types of power and how these can be distributed between the marital partners as long as overall the balance of power remains equal.

Miriam: Oh, there are so many different kinds of power. There's financial power, there's emotional power, there's physical power, any of which either partner can wield. I don't think either of us has power over the other. If we did, I would work to eliminate that. I don't think either of us should have power over the other anyway. It should be equal....Just always be open....you always let the other one know what you're thinking and what you're doing....some kinds of power can be derived by keeping the other person powerless and the way to keep the other person powerless is to deny them sufficient finances, sufficient knowledge, or whatever it is that makes you the more powerful person. So if you're always open and you're always sharing then you're not denying that other person what they need to establish their power too. So, he has no financial power over me even though he makes more than me, because we both put our paychecks into the same account, we pay the bills and we try and save up for a down payment for a house.

Rachel addressed the use of vigilance to monitor her internal expectations as well as her standards for the relationship.

Rachel: I believe that we have a lot of cultural baggage that some of which is not relevant to the 1990's and we have to work on it. I mean that notion of working, that is a real cliché, "we have to work on things," but it is true in the sense that I think you have to stay vigilant, I think you have to stay smart. I think you have to question things, you have to question why you are doing things, and I think it is possible to have a nonoppressive marriage....And so marriage is what you make it but you also have to deal with your own baggage.

Changing poor communication skills. Participants did not enter their marriages with perfect communication skills, nor did any claim to have arrived at perfection. However, an openness to have detrimental communication patterns pointed out and a willingness to change them was imperative for the maintenance of equality. Larry pointed out a typical male communication pattern that he was trying to change.

Larry: And I'm the oldest boy, and a boy, so, I get the burden of, it sounds like a benefit but it is a burden, of what I say is important and I realized that's not true. But that's kind of the programmed response I have, too.

His wife, Miriam explained how they reached a compromise that was responsive to each other's needs.

Miriam: Actually, it used to be a problem. If Larry would get annoyed or angry about something he'd clam up and go for a walk and I'd get really ticked off at that and tell him, "You can't do that, you can't walk out, you can't leave it." So we reached a compromise that he can take a couple minutes, like five or ten minutes, to sort out his feelings and get his thoughts and feelings organized in some kind of orderly fashion that he can present points to me about what's bothering him, and then he'll tell me.

Calvin took on the responsibility to change his communication and explained a process he underwent of learning to label his feelings and learning to notice when he was becoming angry so that he could bring up the problem rather than ignoring it.

Calvin: I also had to learn that I unintentionally send messages with my body language. For instance, when we have a quote "discussion" or argument or whatever, I tend to stand and pace and they [Jennifer and their daughters] tend to sit. That is a physical position where you're coming on as being superior. I didn't realize that but I have tried to remind myself to be the first to sit down in such a situation.

Jennifer: And if he doesn't remember, we remind him.

An unwillingness to change communication patterns such as shutting down emotionally, or holding in anger and then exploding, adversely affected relationships.

Deborah: If there are any problems he shuts down or he wants to ignore them as long as possible. I want to get them resolved as quickly as possible, and I am more comfortable talking out personal problems, fighting out personal problems, and he is more "let's pull down the curtain, let's stop, let's do nothing."...I come up with good reasons [when I argue], I come up with my needs and my feelings. I put forth what I consider to be convincing cases, and it is like I don't exist....it can be simply pulling up the newspaper, it can be just looking blank...or giving me the feedback that he has heard but what I have said isn't worth listening to.

This experience, repeated over the years, has left Deborah feeling emotionally unsafe in the relationship so that she seeks emotional understanding from friends. Mary also mentioned seeking empathy through her artistic endeavors rather than her husband.

"Soul Mates": Emotional Intimacy. Participants acknowledged the importance of feeling emotionally close to one another. This closeness resulted from the process of communication and also motivated couples to work hard at their communication. The couples who described their communication process as successful also described their partner and the relationship in terms that reflected trust and respect.

In their individual interviews both Miriam and Larry proclaimed feeling a special fit between them.

Larry: I don't know if I could love someone the way that I love Laura....I think marriage is the second best thing that ever happened to me, [our son] being the first right now. It's not even the second best. It's not like a hierarchy, this is the first and second. It's just two equal, good things.

Miriam: He's my soul mate, and I know I would never find anybody...as perfect for me as he is. He's everything....I get everything I need from Michael. I could be stranded on a desert island with him and I'd have everything that I need. I would have a full diet. I'd get my 100% daily recommended nutrients. Other friends are for spice, for variety, are for flavor, for a fuller emotional range. I get everything I need from him, but having other people is important too....And I love him, no matter what. I mean I knew he was the right guy for me.

Again in separate interviews, Rose and Patrick conveyed their sense of wonder at a

marriage that continually grows in intimacy.

Rose: I love my husband very much and I am very happy to be married to him. I feel very grateful to have these two people that I live with and I love so much, it is just a real joy to live with these two people.

Patrick: It never struck me that marriage would be an expanding notion. I am a much broader, well-versed person who can see a lot more different perspectives now that I am married and have a child....I know more about people and life and probably myself than I would if I had not gotten married....One of the most satisfying things to me is there is this person that's right there in the house who is my friend who I can say, "What do you think about this?" and get an answer that I really truly want to hear because I need some information, I need to have some sense of where am I on this thing.

It appeared that emotional intimacy is more difficult for those couples who experienced violence or who had an imbalance in household and parenting responsibilities. However, Mary and John described their relationship as two circles overlapping a little bit, with each of them having a large part of their lives separate from the other partner. They both enjoyed this arrangement that provided enough freedom for them to pursue individual interests and enough togetherness to feel cared for and loved. Although John stated that he found it difficult to express how he felt, his words spoke to the closeness that both felt was present in their marriage.

John: I just can't really see myself having a relationship with someone else that Mary and I have....Nobody else would put up with me. I don't know exactly what I mean....We enjoy each other's company for the most part, unless I want to go bowling or she wants to go to a musical. It's just the meshing of souls I guess. We are kindred spirits you might say. I can't really conceive of that coming about with anyone else. I don't know. I can't put it in words.

Elizabeth and Carl, and Jennifer and Calvin also spoke to their closeness. Calvin, as noted above, and Carl were willing to change particular habits about themselves for the sake of the relationship and out of love for their wives. Carl is a good example of the sacrifices these men made for supporting their wives' careers and interests. He helped Elizabeth with a major writing project and assisted her in opening their home to guests and groups of women organizing themselves for feminist agenda purposes. Calvin has provided a steady income which allowed Jennifer to venture out in her small business and to take financial risks. After completing his degree, Patrick sought employment in the local area where Rose was already established. Dan and Barb were arranging their

finances so that in two years she can pursue her master's degree. John discussed arranging his schedule so that Mary could pursue opportunities for her artistic career which meant nights away from the family for weeks at a time.

Criticizing Oppression. Spouses made a combined effort to comment on internal and external oppression such as discrimination and sexism. At this point husbands' participation in the criticism, both verbally and nonverbally, was vital. Couple's joint action in this area seemed to function to unite them. The husbands' sharing in and initiation of the critique demonstrated their feminist commitment and thus provided a safe place for women to talk about their experiences and their feelings of anger and frustration. The following example illustrates the experiences common among the participants and typical ways of handling them. Barb and Dan had detailed accounts that illustrated what other couples experienced also.

Barb: We've always been able to both see that happen [discrimination] and either take it with a sense of humor or deal with it and get the situation straightened out quite quickly. It really did happen with the car.....This was before we were married....He was just tagging along with me. I was asking all the pertinent questions, and I was talking money. And one of the sales guys that we had kept asking Dan questions about how he wanted money. And I would ask a question and he would talk to Dan and answer him. After about the fifth time of doing this Dan looked at the man and said, "I don't know why you're wasting your breath talking to me because I'm not buying the car, she's buying the car. I don't know how much she's going to pay for it, that's her decision because it's her money and it's her car and I'm just along for the joy ride. So I would suggest if you plan on selling a car to one of us, it should probably be her because I'm not buying one." And the guy looked at him, and then he looked at me and then he started talking to me. Of course at that time he had already lost the sale. A, because I didn't like the car, and B, I wouldn't have bought a car from him in the first place. So we're aware of those kinds of situations that go on and we help each other out. Like in that kind of situation, if I can't get someone's attention because I happen to be female, or they're not dealing with me like they should be because I'm female, then Dan will point that out. He will make a comment, he will walk away. He will do something so that they're suddenly forced with me. And I'll do the same thing with him.

Dan: Where Barb works, it's got all sorts of discrimination problems. I think it's very evident...it's just very, very blatant. I consider it sexual discrimination, apparently it's not, according with the EEO, it's not blatant enough to warrant anything. But if you go there and you listen to people talk and you understand their attitude and you look at the way it is set up, it is clear, it's clear what's going on. That affects us in the sense that on a daily basis Barb has to come home and unload her frustration because her work environment is extremely frustrating.

Dan now listens more to Barb's unloading than he did when they were first married. He and Barb had been coworkers prior to his finding a job in his field of local government so he was familiar with the work situation which frustrated him also. He did not want to hear her frustration, but they negotiated time spent preparing dinner as their unloading time to meet both of their needs to verbalize anger.

Critique of sexism in society translated into relationship decisions concerning money and major family issues. Couples reported putting the wife's name first on the tax return or on a car registration. Some consciously decided to put half of the credit in the wife's name, while others had separate accounts even if they had a joint account for household bills.

Calvin: For example, if we are putting something into a title, like a car, certain times she is the person that gets credit for it, certain times I am. We consciously try to do that even if the other person is not present and try to correct people and so forth. It is, I think, in our relationship an important thing we do is respect that we show to the other person in order to do that.

Men explained making a conscious decision not to make decisions or to delay making a decision in order to consult with their partners. They mentioned monitoring themselves on this because their tendency would be to make decisions especially when asked to do so by others outside of the relationship who reinforced this male privilege, as Larry became aware during the past 12 years of marriage.

Larry: Well, the world we're in still expects to see the male making all the decisions about what the family is going to do..... So dealing with people ranging from a car salesman to everything else, expect me to make any decision that is confronting what we should do....They talk to me, and I don't like that. I don't want them to talk to me, I want them to talk to both of us. But, like I said, because of the person I am, I try to make sure Miriam is involved in it.

In addition, couples monitored any internal sexism or stereotypes that they held or exhibited.

Dan: I monitor myself, not necessarily to appease her, just to make sure that I don't insult myself by saying something that I think is stupid because there are occasions that you slip and say things that I can't believe I said or I really didn't mean that. I know that's stupid.

Summary

Through marriage and beliefs of equality, these couples demonstrated their traditional and feminist ideological roots. They balanced their desire for acceptance by others with a desire to develop a relationship based on their beliefs. Their marriages were based on standards different from traditional marriage, however. While fathers were involved with their children, very involved by some standards, women wanted equal involvement. What was expected was two fully functioning adults, both able to give and receive nurturing and love. When this did not occur, problems arose. A feminist awareness provided the standard to assess the relationship and the language to work on changing experiences of subordination. When change was requested it came from the women, except in the case of Deborah and Milton it came from both. At times a "marriage between equals discourse" hid underlying inequalities.

Having two fully functioning adults appeared to be easier when women had second marriages. Perhaps this was due to having raised their children to school age, thereby reducing conflict over parenting. However, Rose and Patrick's experience highlighted the possibility of shared parenting. Many men chose to what extent to use their privilege of not being equally responsible for parenting, household tasks, and physical safety. This privilege stems from the larger context of patriarchy in which men's interests supersede those of women. Goodrich (1991) doubted the ability of couples to establish a truly equal marriage given this context, even when both partners are dedicated to doing so. These couples, however, did try and reported some successes and some disappointments. When compared to the surrounding environment these marriages were not oppressive but provided more nurturance, therefore women experienced them as empowering. By marrying a man who was a self-identified feminist, critical of societal standards of male and female behavior, women assured themselves some degree of safety and support.

Feminism was life-saving for the women in that it provided a way to make sense of their experiences of oppression throughout their lives and provided a way to ensure to some extent their choosing a man who could validate their experiences through sharing a world view that included feminism. Thus, they had someone with whom they could process their anger, frustration, and worry about the gender injustice they endured in the world. Feminism was life-enhancing for the men. Their connections with women

were expanded at home and at work. They benefited from feminism by having more emotionally close relationships with their children than their fathers had with them or that they saw male friends and family members have with their children.

Some of these marriages leaned more toward having traditional drawbacks for women while others leaned more toward a relationship with mutual benefits. In either case, these couples subverted patriarchal marriage, perhaps quietly but significantly because they were trying to fashion marriage to suit their needs and wants. They were living their lives: they chose marriage, and they chose feminism because they fit with their needs which they label as legitimate.

CHAPTER 5 Discussion

The Reclamation of Marriage by Feminists

Feminist scholarship has critiqued the traditional nuclear family as a socially constructed institution, demonstrating its problematic nature for women. "Feminists have sought to reclaim the family for women" through a decomposition of family relationships to show how they have been detrimental to women's well-being (Glenn, 1987, p. 358). Marriage takes its toll on women financially, emotionally, and physically (Bernard, 1982; Ferree, 1990). A feminist postmodern perspective allowed an investigation of the differing marital experiences of women to determine if marriage is always and only oppressive to women while also maintaining a critical view that assumed the centrality of women's well-being as a standard (Allen & Baber, 1992; Baber & Allen, in press; Hawkesworth, 1989).

The deconstruction of family life to uncover the invisible labor and the hidden costs of family and marital life to women has enabled women to name what has happened to them, thereby demystifying themselves and claiming what is real for them (Du Bois, 1983). Although this deconstruction needs to continue, feminists are already proposing ways in which relationships can be reconstructed to empower women (Glenn, 1987; Thorne, 1982). Goodrich (1991) proposed that true empowerment of women calls for validation of all forms of family, particularly those in which women live without men. All relationships, including reconstructed ones and new visions of family life, are required in the ongoing transformation of patriarchy.

While the questions posed in Chapter 1 did not dictate the structure of this chapter, the responses to these questions are embedded in the discussion below. Couples described feminism as influencing their beliefs about equality within personal relationships, providing standards for marriage, and motivating women to demand appropriate treatment and men to demand more relationship work from themselves. Couples discussed the double consciousness of married heterosexual feminists by relating their strategies for interacting with one another and the larger society. Through the process of communication, the couples built equality, but also at times through discourse they concealed inequality (Hare-Mustin, 1991). Participants experienced feminism as live-saving for women and life-enhancing for men.

Empowerment

These couples were not immune from the potential problems of violence, parenting, and household responsibilities. However, their feminist beliefs made them aware of problems, and provided a language through which these issues could be addressed and harmful attitudes and behaviors identified. Through feminism, women had the courage to demand appropriate treatment and men had the necessary awareness of inequality to expect more relationship work from themselves. What resulted was a mutual empowerment, that is interacting with one another so that both felt competent and took action and both increased their connection with others (Goodrich, 1991). Feminism has encouraged these women to connect with other women throughout their adult lives and has provided a way for men to connect with their families. These women were active in promoting the liberation of women, and these men were supportive of that action and promoted feminism through discussions with friends, colleagues, and family.

Strategies

These couples managed the contradiction of blending feminism with an institution that is nested within a larger context of gender inequality by a series of strategies. First, they recognized the possibility of marriage being detrimental to women and used examples of others' marriages and other situations to evaluate the extent to which their own was nonoppressive. When women compared the environment of their relationship to the one outside of it where they experienced sexism and discrimination, they could not label both oppressive. Too much discrepancy existed between the two environments. But this is not necessarily a case of the lesser of two evils. Women experienced marriage as a relationship that nurtured them. Labeling these marriages with one term, *oppressive*, would mystify these women's experiences. Marriage was multidimensional for these women, containing both costs and benefits with the latter outweighing the former.

Second, these participants' descriptions documented the key role communication plays in building equality between partners. Empowerment comes from the ability to listen from the heart (Collins, 1990). "For each person in a conversation to give the other this quality of attending leads each one to increased self-worth, zest, knowledge, energy for action and desire for more connection" (Goodrich, 1991, p. 24). The emphasis of these couples on intimate conversation is critical to understanding their

perceptions of equal power. Disclosure and focus on the other increase connection, empathy, and the feeling of mutual power; whereas power-over relies on disconnection and competition (Jordan, 1991). Equality requires the establishment of this "free dialogue" (Nielsen, 1990, p. 30). In addition to their emotional intimacy, their vigilance in monitoring their expectations, interactions, and behavior functioned as a corrective strategy. When this strategy did not work, the vigilance turned into a struggle over division of workload. Some men chose not to take on their share of the work, exemplifying continued male privilege within marriage. Even when couples' marriages appeared similar to traditional marriage in the division of workload, they also had significant differences. The men verbally assumed the label feminist in a current climate that they were all aware of as antagonist toward a feminist agenda. These men were aware of their privileged status in society, although some did not admit to that privilege within their marriage. However, their feminist identification and the corresponding action were vital to the establishment of a relationship in which women were free to vent their frustrations and anger at their experiences and observations of injustice. When husbands also did this they reaffirmed their goal of equality and their chosen lifestyle arrangements to themselves and to their wives. These men fit Kimmel's (1992) description of pro-feminist men who "are everyday men who are trying...to make a life of meaning and coherence in a difficult and often painful world" (p. 45). Shared world views, including a commitment to feminism, provided a sense of safety for women to critique injustices they experienced in their lives.

Third, couples used their marriages to meet personal needs, not to make statements about their feminism. No one was trying to prove a point that feminists can succeed at marriage or that it was possible to blend marriage and feminism. Everyone was clear that divorce was an option should the marriage fail to meet their needs. Women experienced their marriages as meeting to some degree their personal needs for intimacy, resources, acceptance, validation, and commitment. Thus one label did not reflect the various hues of their marriage.

If feminism offers a standard whereby intimate relationships can be critiqued, why do some women stay within relationships that appeared to be more of a struggle? Some possible reasons are offered. First, these women have a strong traditional desire for acceptance and commitment. Being married carries privileges of social acceptance and

can waylay the fear of being alone. Second, a sense of personal failure should the couple divorce could be functioning here. Women still feel the responsibility for the success or failure of marriage. By staying in a marriage, one has not yet technically failed, nor has one had to tear apart that portion of her self-identity (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surry, 1991). However, the desire to live life within a longterm relationship and the belief that one can continue in a less than perfect marriage were honored by these women. They valued their own needs while accepting that no relationship is perfect.

Subverting Patriarchy Through Marriage

These couples assumed marriage as part of the landscape worth salvaging in order to meet personal needs. Mixing feminism with marriage is like placing a wolf in sheep's clothing: at first glance it seems innocuous enough, but it has the potential of causing a great stir across the landscape. This feminist reclamation of marriage is occurring through the appropriation of an accepted practice to take on new meanings and significance. This redefinition is possible due to the ability of these women to care for themselves and thus choose divorce should they decide marriage no longer empowers them (Okin, 1989). These couples are subverting patriarchal marriage, perhaps quietly but significantly, because they fashioned marriage to suit their needs and wants, needs identified through a feminist lens and labeled as legitimate.

Perhaps the most interesting need labeled as legitimate for these women was the need of their children. Stacey (1986) highlighted the issue raised by the conservative feminist critique: perhaps women and children's needs are not fully compatible. The women in this study appeared very aware of an incompatibility. While some evoked essential differences between women and men to justify the women's greater involvement in child rearing, the women also evoked children's needs to explain their response of staying at home or working part-time or their dissatisfaction with having to return to work earlier than they wanted. These women valued the caring of children and were willing to follow through on that value by placing their careers second.

Upon reading the first draft of Chapter 4, one woman responded by stating that she was interpreted as "selling out" her feminist beliefs when becoming a mother. She considered her actions as more fully subscribing to a feminist understanding of power, rather than a masculine definition of power as getting ahead in a career. She suggested that her husband be brought to task for not choosing a part-time job so he could join her

with their son: not to enable her to get back out to working full time but to enjoy their son and add to their son's experience of stability and validation.

Such an attitude might be labeled as "false consciousness," the playing into male domination by taking on typically female behavior. However, this concept has been criticized for portraying women as victims or fools without explaining how some women acquire real feminist consciousness (Stacey, 1986). Glenn (1987) considered such attitudes as the women in this study portrayed for mothering as "reflections of the actual contradictions women confront" (p. 358). She concluded that families "may not be experienced as uniformly oppressive" by women, therefore research must remain grounded in women's experiences "however complex and contradictory" (p. 358). The experiences of these women tell a story of women who are trying to reclaim the family based on feminist beliefs, sometimes helped by men who share parenting and household responsibilities and sometimes hindered by men who do not. These women are unwilling to make their lives into a dichotomy of either children or career, nor are they willing to become the burnout superwoman. They are going beyond these stereotypes of the 1970s and 1980s to a synthesis that recognizes that being in relationships, any relationship, requires costs and that having children requires placing their needs first at times. They are not willing to do this synthesis alone but have partners who are responding, in various degrees, to the feminist call for equality in parenting and caring for the home. If feminists are accepting descriptions of subordination from women, feminists should also accept the experiences of empowerment from women (Colker, 1991). Chafetz (1990) predicted transformation of patriarchy will only occur through women assuming elite, powerful positions acquired through sacrificing some of the values and behaviors defined as feminine and heralded by some feminists as the basis of true power.

Implications of Research

The results of this study suggest some areas in which family therapists could assist couples in recognizing inequalities and in enhancing relationships. The use of ritual to make implicit values explicit, the discourse of choice as hiding inequality, and the need for communication training are explored below. General implications of how this research can be used for women and men are reviewed.

Implications for Therapy

Ritual. The importance of ritual in family life is known to family therapists (Imber-Black, Roberts, & Whiting, 1988). According to Roberts (1988), "ritual works as both a maintainer and creator of social structure for individuals, families and social communities, as well as a maintainer and creator of world view" (p. 15). The couples in this study appropriated the wedding ceremony and to varying extents remade it into a ritual that reflected their beliefs of equality. So the wedding ceremony is a good metaphor for what these couples are trying to do: recover marriage for their own use. An appropriated or reclaimed ritual carries with it a powerful statement about a couple's belief because it deviates from the norm. For example, when a couple that walks down the aisle together prior to being married stands in relief to "the giving away" of the bride from one man to another.

A couple's description of their wedding ceremony can provide clues to how the couple views marriage and gender. Did the man participate in the preparations and decisions about the ceremony and reception, or did the woman do all of that work? Could the couple compromise about what they wanted in the ceremony, or did one person's desires dictate what happened? What events took place or did not take place during the ceremony and reception that reinforced male privilege and female subordination or brought them into question? Who wrote the thank-you notes for the wedding presents? These questions can be asked in the future tense of couples who will be marrying or remarrying to raise gender-related power issues.

Repeating the marriage ceremony has been used to mark a couple's renewed commitment to one another. Raising questions about what the ceremony symbolizes in terms of gender can also serve to validate the goal of striving for equality in a relationship, an equality based on carrying out good intentions and words through action.

"Feminism is about choice" discourse. The subtlety and power of the "marriage between equals discourse" to hide gender inequality has been insightfully discussed elsewhere (Hare-Mustin, 1991). The addition of another example of how talk about the equality in a relationship sometimes obscures the inequality that is occurring is offered. Participants' descriptions of their lives brought to light the use of the statement "feminism is about choice" to conceal marital and parenting arrangements in

which the woman ends up with greater responsibility than the man but under the guise of choice rather than intended oppression. Although feminism does incorporate choice, these couples chose similar solutions to parenting, i.e., the women were more likely to become primary caretakers.

Therapists working with couples need to explore how parenting and domestic arrangements were made and sustained. If staying at home with children were a true choice, then more men would be choosing it. Is the evoking of the phrase "feminism is about choices" one way to justify primary parenting by mothers (Scott & Lyman, 1968)?

For some women, however, feminism has provided a renewed confirmation of their desire to nurture and care for their children. These women arrange their lives so that they can stay home full time or part time. For them feminism concerns options. A discussion could ensue about possible resentment if a father does not share this dedication to parenting. How does a woman know she is choosing parenting from a stand of valuing the parenting role versus taking the larger share of parenting because the father refused to participate in shared parenting?

Communication. This study corroborates what other studies have documented: the importance of communication in the development of satisfying relationships and the detrimental effect of shutting down and lack of empathy (Guerney, 1977; Gottman, 1991; Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1990). The participants in this study highlighted their efforts to communicate anger, needs, and feelings in ways that their partners could hear. Participants used a variety of ways to learn about their communication patterns: discussion groups, writing down reactions, journaling, and receiving feedback from family members. Some couples found reading the book *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (Tannen, 1990) helpful in labeling gendered ways of communicating. Raising questions about communication patterns can locate how power differentials sometimes are maintained. Practice of any new communication skills should take place in the therapy session before assuming their application at home (Guerney, 1977).

Research for Women and Men

Although this study is limited to the lives of 10 couples, their experiences give evidence that women and men can reclaim marriage for the benefit of both partners. These couples' lives confirm that longterm, heterosexual marriage can be empowering for women. Marriage as an institution has not failed women, patriarchal marriage has. What must couples have in a marriage to make it empowering for women? These couples suggest that the sharing of a world view, is crucial to each partner feeling accepted and validated by the other partner and feeling comfortable in their marriage. The critiquing of gender injustice reinforces the function of the relationship as a place where women and men can feel safe to comment on their experiences of injustices outside of and within the marriage. Men's participation in this criticism affirms their feminist beliefs and their dedication to building equality.

Women would do well to "come into their own," as one participant described, before marrying. Women should complete their education, be able financially to care for themselves, and know and honor their own opinions and values. Feminism certainly provides a language to help women clarify their experiences of injustice and thus make sense of their world. Feminism provides the language for women to name their experiences of discrimination, double messages, sexual harassment, and subordination and to talk about their expectations for equal treatment and shared parenting and household responsibilities. According to the men interviewed for this study, feminism offered them the opportunity to be more responsible for relationships, and thus resulted in close emotional ties with family members. Women who are seeking relationships with men would be advised by the experiences of these couples to choose men who are comfortable identifying themselves as feminists, who actively critique gender injustice, and who promote the well-being of women. As one female participant noted, feeling the freedom to express opinions and views without having to argue and justify an interpretation of oppression is a good indication of a man's respect for a woman and for feminism.

Limitations of Study

Drawbacks to the chosen method, interviewing, include discrepancies between what people do and what they say they do and between what they say they believe in the interview and what they say they believe in other situations. Misunderstanding participants' language, not observing daily lives, and making assumptions about daily lives are also shortcomings of the interview method. However, Taylor and Bogdan (1984) recommended that by acknowledging these limitations and focusing on in-depth interviewing, the skilled researcher can "learn how informants view themselves and their world, sometimes obtain an accurate account of past events and current activities, and almost never predict exactly how an informant will act in a new situation" (p. 83).

The reliance on self-reports limits firm conclusions about equal division of parenting and household tasks because other researchers have noted men and women overstating men's involvement in these areas (see Thompson & Walker, 1989). When a participant said that a husband did as much or more work than a wife, follow-up questions focused on particular tasks and reasons for this perception and the other partner was questioned for her or his perception and understanding of division of responsibility. For example, one woman thought her husband did more work than she around the house. Her husband disagreed, and they discussed the reasons for her perception. She decided that she felt preparing evening meals was a burden, but her husband who had that chore did not consider it so. Follow-up questions revealed that he did the chores she disliked, such as cleaning the cat pan daily. Participants were asked how others perceived their relationship. Often couples had received comments from friends or family about the men's responsibility for cooking, shopping, or doing laundry. Participants' views of how feminism had influenced the management of these responsibilities was important. In all cases, feminism has brought the men into assuming some portion of the work of the home, and the more it was perceived as unequal by the wives, the greater the struggle to correct it.

Another limitation of this study is based on the participants' demographics: white, highly educated, and middle to upper-middle class. The advertisement in the regional newspapers allowed for a self-selection of participants not normally associated with NOW, but no couples of racial or ethnic diversity responded. Perhaps this highlights the association of feminism with white, middle class women (Collins, 1990). The results of

this study certainly are bound by its sociohistorical context. The lifestyles of the women and men in this study were privileged. The options these couples took advantage of, such as childcare and cleaning services, required significant incomes and jobs with a high degree of autonomy, autonomy that is not easily available to most workers (Chafetz, 1990).

A third limitation of this study rests with the lack of extensive research experience on my part. What later appeared to be obvious areas of exploration in reading the transcriptions were not followed up on during the interview process. This limitation relates to another: trying to cover so many questions and topics. After the pilot study, some questions were condensed into others if it appeared they resulted in similar information but still time constraints meant some questions were not asked of all participants.

Future Research

As noted above, future researchers should make a concerted effort to recruit diverse racial and ethnic groups in order to better study the intersections of race, class, feminism, and marriage. In addition, comparisons could be made with lesbian and gay couples to address the further intersection of heterosexism.

Future research could focus on interviewing female and male feminists who have chosen not to marry but to live together. Their conceptions of marriage could be compared to those acquired from this sample. Does the understanding of marriage differ between these groups? Does one emphasize the drawbacks of marriage and the other the benefits? Do these two groups of couples have different backgrounds or support from family for their decisions? How do the groups compare in division of household responsibilities, parenting, and episodes of violence?

Heterosexual married couples in which the man assumed the label feminist after marriage could be interviewed. Does it make a difference in the marriage if the man self-identifies as a feminist after marriage? What was the process by which he assumed the label?

Additional couples in which the partners agree with the agenda of feminism but will not use the label feminist could be interviewed for comparison with the couples of this present study. How important is the use of the label feminist? To what degree does the

willingness to use the label feminist reflect what occurs in a marriage? Do these couples also critique oppression? Do they share a world view? Do relationships dynamics and the well-being of women vary by world view? Do they have the language to label and explain gender injustice?

Reclaiming Marriage for Feminists

"To reclaim: to bring into useful condition, as waste or neglected land; to recover for use from refuse or waste material; to bring back to right conduct" (Random House Dictionary, 1980, p. 747).

The above definition highlights the process of reclamation (to bring, to recover, to bring back) and its goal (useful condition, for use, right conduct). Couples in this study reported what was a struggle for some and vigilance for others: the slow reclamation of marriage based on a feminist agenda. These participants represented variations of heterosexual married couples with first and second marriages, with and without children. In all of these marriages evidence existed of women's and men's dedication to equality and choices for women, awareness of the privileged status of men in society, and arrangement of their relationship to benefit the woman as well as the man. Toward the end of her book Jessie Bernard wrote, "And so now to the first order of business. To upgrade the wife's marriage...." (1982, p. 289). These couples were upgrading the wives' marriages through a variety of ways, but particularly through upgraded expectations of what women should receive from marriage and from their husbands. Support for women's specific career, educational and vocational goals was commonplace as men adjusted their schedules and jobs to offer concrete evidence of their support.

Discussing such a thing as a "feminist" marriage is premature given the need for major institutional changes in society, such as equal pay for equivalent work and flexible work hours and benefits to allow for shared parenting. Ideally such a marriage is attainable but as the process of reclamation continues marriage could be changed to such an extent that it does not resemble marriages of today, as one participant noted. Feminists cannot be sure what heterosexual relationships will look like when: women's work receives equitable recompense and value in society; men and women are equally dedicated to parenting and caring for the young, the old, and the sick; women and men in equal numbers are in positions of authority in government, education, religion, and

health care; and women do not experience a pervasiveness of violence in their lives (Yllo & Bograd, 1988).

Feminism is making inroads into these lands of patriarchy. But the transformation of relationships cannot wait for structural changes, both must progress simultaneously and as they do, the progress must be noted and critiqued. Women and men need validation of what they are doing and feedback about what remains to be done. As Steinem said, "The future depends entirely on what each of us does every day. After all, a movement is only people moving" (Gibbs & McDowell, 1992, p. 57).

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Appendix A

Advertisement Placed in Newsletters and Newspapers to Recruit Volunteers for Study

Feminists in Heterosexual Marriages

If you and your partner identified yourselves as feminists prior to marriage and have been married for at least 5 years, you're invited to take part in a research project.

Please call Karen Blaisure, Doctoral Candidate, Virginia Tech, [phone number].

Appendix B

Participant Consent Form

This research study is an exploration of the marriage of feminists. Participation in this study will consist of two interviews of approximately two hours each. The first interview is a joint interview of both spouses. The second interview is an individual one. Additional interviews might be requested to clarify information. The setting and time of the interviews will be arranged for your convenience.

Interviews will be audiotaped and transcribed. Only first names will be used in the transcriptions. Future written documents and oral presentations (e.g., dissertation, journal articles, conference presentations) will use pseudonyms. Any identifying information such as place of work or address will be held confidential and will not be disclosed in any way. All conversations will be considered confidential.

I hope participation in the study will prove to be interesting and illuminating. However, I am aware that uncomfortable reactions are possible. If at any time you change your mind about continuing in the study or in the interview, you are encouraged to pause, postpone, or cancel your participation. You may withdraw from the study at any time. You have the right to withdraw any and all information provided during the interviews.

Thank you for your consideration to participate in this study.

Your Signature

Researcher's Signature

Date

Appendix C
Interview Guides: Original Guide and Revised Guide
Original Joint Interview Guide

Explanation of Study and Consent Form

1. Do you have any questions about the study?
2. Do you have any questions about confidentiality?
3. Do you have any questions about withdrawing from the study?

Description of Feminist Beliefs

1. Do you define yourself as a feminist?
2. How did you come to hold feminist beliefs?
3. In what ways, if any, has that definition changed?
4. Do you share a definition of feminism?
5. How did feminism impact your decision to marry?

History of Relationship

1. Tell me about when you met and how you decided to marry.
2. When and where did you marry?
3. Tell me about your life together since you married.

Description of Everyday Lives

1. Tell me about a typical workday.
2. Tell me about a typical day on the weekend.
3. Describe how you manage work and home life.
4. What leisure activities do you do?

Participation in the Study

1. Why did you volunteer for this study?
2. What do you want me to understand about you, your life, and your marriage?

Overview of questions for next interview, if participants qualify. Ask them to think about these topics. Set meeting time and place for individual interviews.

Original Individual Interview Guide

How do spouses describe the impact of their feminist beliefs on their marriages?

1. How do you define feminist? How did you come hold feminist beliefs? Do you think your spouse defines feminist in the same way?
2. How did you understand feminism before getting married? Has that changed?
3. Why did you choose to marry?
4. How does your marriage reflect your feminist beliefs?
5. How does your marriage not reflect feminist beliefs?
6. Describe any types of violence that have occurred in your marriage.
7. Have you ever thought about leaving your marriage?
8. How do you think family and friends would describe your marriage?
9. What phrase or saying would you use to describe your marriage? How do you think your spouse would describe it?
10. Do you encounter obstacles that hinder you from creating a marriage based on feminist principles? If so, please describe. Do you think your spouse agrees?
11. Do you encounter obstacles from friends, coworkers, and employers that hinder you from creating a marriage based on feminist principles? If so, please describe. Do you think your spouse would agree with this?
12. Do you encounter problems from family that hinder you from creating a marriage based on feminist principles? If so, please describe. Do you think your spouse would agree with this?
13. Do you encounter obstacles from your partner that hinder you from having a marriage based on feminist principles? If so, please describe. Do you think your spouse would agree with this?
14. Compare you and your spouse to other couples who are feminists.
15. How does being a feminist alter a marriage based on feminist beliefs?

To what extent do spouses talk about having a double consciousness of marriage?

1. Do you experience any tension or struggle as a feminist in marriage?
2. Do you consider feminism and marriage to be contrary to one another? If so, in what ways? In what ways are they not contrary? If not, describe how you have combined marriage and feminism.
3. Do you experience any of your feelings being ignored?
4. Have you ever ignored any of your spouse's feelings?

How do spouses describe and interpret equality/inequality and valuing/devaluation in their marriages?

1. In what ways do you think you and your spouse are equal?
2. In what ways do you think you and your spouse are unequal?
3. What do you do for your marriage that you value? Do you think your spouse agrees?
4. What do you do for your marriage that is not valued by you and/or by your spouse?
5. What do you think your spouse does for your marriage that you value? Do you think your spouse agrees?
6. What do you think your spouse does for your marriage that you do not value? Do you think your spouse values it?

How does gender organize spouses' marriages and lives?

1. Tell me about your job and education.
2. Who has financial responsibility for your family? How was this decided?
3. Who has responsibility for running the home? How was this decided?
4. Do you have joint or separate accounts? Who takes care of paying the bills and managing the money?
5. Explain in what ways you are satisfied and dissatisfied with your marriage.
6. Describe the amount and type of emotional and relational work you put into the marriage.
7. Do you feel as though you have power in your marriage? How do you account for this power/lack of power? Please describe some situations in which you felt this way.
8. In what ways do you think your spouse is satisfied or dissatisfied with your marriage.

How do spouses describe and explain their choices around having/not having children, the impact this has on their marriage and their feminist beliefs, and the impact their feminist beliefs have on their decisions about children.

1. Do you have children? If yes, how many? What are they ages and names?
2. Describe the process of arriving at your current family size.
3. How does having/not having children impact you and your marriage?
4. Are you satisfied with your current family size?
5. How does having/not having children impact your feminist beliefs?
6. How do your feminist beliefs impact having/not having children?
7. What are the benefits to having/not having children?
8. What are the drawbacks to having/not having children?

If there are children:

9. Have you changed in any way since becoming a parent? If yes, how?
10. How are children cared for? How was this decided? Are you satisfied with this arrangement?
11. Describe your child care arrangements. Are you satisfied with them?
12. Describe you interactions with your child(ren). Are you satisfied with them?
13. What is the process of making decisions regarding your children?
14. What, if anything, would you change about having children?

Additional Questions

1. What question(s) haven't I asked that you want me to ask?
2. Do you want to add anything more about this topic?
3. Have you changed by participating in these interviews? If so, in what ways?

Revised Joint Interview Guide

Feminist Beliefs

- Confidentiality, study
- Define self feminist
- Define feminist
- How became feminist
- Feminism impact decision to marry

Relationship History

- When met & decided to marry
- When & where married
- Why marriage
- Life since marriage
- Before/after marriage

Everyday Lives

- Workday & weekend
- Manage work & home
- Responsibility for home
- Leisure activities
- Job & education
- Financial responsibility
- Accounts, pay bills

Children

- Have children, names & ages
- Process of arriving at current size
- Influence on marriage
- Influence on feminist beliefs
- Feminist beliefs influence having/not children
- Benefits/drawbacks
- Child care & decision

Study

- Why did you volunteer
- What should I understand about you
your marriage, your life

Revised Individual Interview Guide

Children

- Interactions
- Process of decision making
- Would change anything

Gender

- Personal items spend money on
- Satisfied/not with marriage
- Amount & type of emotional work
- Have power in marriage?
Describe
- Partner satisfied/not with marriage

Feminist Beliefs

- Family & friends describe marriage
- Spouse, partner, wife, husband
- Phrase or saying
- Obstacles to creating marriage
- Compare with other feminists

Double Consciousness

- Tension, struggle as feminist in marriage
- Feminism & marriage contrary
- How combine feminism & marriage
- Any violence
- Thought of leaving marriage
- Ever marry again

Valuing

- Equal & unequal
- What do you do you value
- What do you do spouse values/not
- Spouse does you value
- Spouse does don't value
- Feelings ignored
- Ignore spouse's feelings

Wrap-up

- Unasked questions
- Add anything
- Impacted by participating

Appendix D

Guiding Questions for Gathering Feedback from Couples in Pilot Study

1. What do you think were the most important questions and/or topics covered in the interviews?
2. What do you think were the least important questions and/or topics covered in the interviews?
3. If you could change anything about this research process, what would it be and how would you change it?
4. What was the most important in the research process in terms of our interaction?

* These questions are adapted from Roberts, J. (1987) Feedback from clients. *Journal of Strategic and Systemic Therapies*, 6, 76.

Appendix E

Coding Categories

Developing Feminist Beliefs

- Growing Up**
- College**
- Discrimination**

Defining Feminism

- Definitions**
- Literature Read**
- Activism**

Feminism and the Decision to Marry

- Reasons to Marry**
- Social and Political Views**
- The Wedding Ceremony**
- Names**
- Feminist Influence on Decision**

Blending Feminism and Marriage

- Structural Power**
- Oppression as a Possibility**
- Oppression as Cultural Mandates**
- Oppression as Internal Expectations**
- Oppression and Relationship**
- Annoyances and Obstacles**
- Response to Annoyances and Obstacles**

Subordination

- Episodes of Violence**
- Personality Differences**
- Parenting**
- Domestic Tasks**
- Dissatisfactions**

The Process of Maintaining Equality

- Communication**
- Vigilance**
- Emotional Intimacy**
- Anger and Conflict**
- Critiques of Society**

VITA
Karen R. Blaisure

EDUCATION

Ph.D., 1992, Department of Family and Child Development, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University.

Major Area: Marriage & Family Therapy.

Dissertation: *Feminism and Marriage: A Qualitative Analysis.*

M.A. 1985, Department of Speech Communication, Pennsylvania State University.

Major Area: Interpersonal Communication.

Thesis: *Marital Relationship Enhancement Skills Workshop: Perceptions of and Recruitment for a Marriage Enrichment Weekend.*

B.S. 1983, Houghton College, Houghton, NY.

Major Area: Communication. Graduated magna cum laude.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Academic Experience

Teaching Assistant: Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University.
August 1989 to May 1991. FCD 3314 Human Sexuality.

Public Speaking Instructor: Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA.
January to May 1986. SPCH 101 Public Speaking

Teaching Assistant: Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.
August 1983 to August 1985. SC 100 Public Speaking

Relationship Enhancement Leader: Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA. June 1984 to August 1985. IFS 497 Modifying Conjugal Life

Clinical Experience

Family Therapy Intern and Part-time Employee: Tidewater Psychiatric Institute, Virginia Beach, VA. June 1991 to May 1992.

Therapist: The Center for Family Services, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University. April 1990 to May 1991

Education Services Supervisor: Navy Family Services Center, Norfolk, VA.
April 1987 to Aug. 1989

Adult Programs Specialist: Navy Family Services Center, Norfolk, VA.
July 1986 to April 1987

Family Aftercare Coordinator: New Beginnings/Serenity Lodge, Chesapeake, VA.
July to November 1986

HONORS AND AWARDS

Graduate Student Teaching Award, 1991. Department of Family and Child Development.
Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University.

Senior Award in Communications, 1983. Houghton College, Houghton, NY.

RESEARCH GRANTS

The Fahs-Beck Fund for Research and Experimentation. November 1991. The New York
Community Trust. Dissertation proposal, *Feminists and Marriage: A Qualitative
Analysis*. \$2,220.

Graduate Research Development Project Grant. August 1991. Graduate Student
Assembly, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University. Dissertation proposal,
Feminists and Marriage: A Qualitative Analysis. \$500.

Outstanding Proposal from a Feminist Perspective Award. November, 1991. Feminism
and Family Studies Section of the National Council on Family Relations. Dissertation
proposal: *Feminists and Marriage: A Qualitative Analysis*. \$500.

PUBLICATIONS

Blaisure, K. R., & Arnold-Mann, J. (1992). Return and reunion: A
psychoeducational program aboard U.S. Navy ships. *Family Relations*, 41, 178-185.

Blaisure, K. R. (1990). Qualitative research and family therapy. *Qualitative Family
Research Network*, 4(2), 5-6, 18-20.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. From 1989 to Present. Student Member.

National Council on Family Relations. From 1990 to Present.

Sections: Research and Theory, Feminism and Family Studies, Family Therapy.

Qualitative Family Research Network. From 1990 to Present.

Southeastern Council on Family Relations. From 1991 to Present.

PRESENTATIONS

Refereed

Strengthening the Navy Family: A Normative Proactive Model. Presented at the annual conference of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy. Washington, D. C., October 6, 1990.

Reconciling the Concept of Power with Family Therapy. Presented at the annual Southeast Symposium on Family and Child Development. University of Georgia, April 7, 1990.

Active Duty Navy Single Parents. Presented at Celebrate the Family: Third Eastern Symposium on Building Family Strengths. Pennsylvania State University, March 23, 1987.

The Communication Do's and Don'ts in Women's Prescriptive Literature. Presented at the annual meeting of the Eastern Communication Association. Atlantic City, NJ, May 1986.

INVITED PRESENTATIONS AND WORKSHOPS

Meeting Professional and Home Responsibilities. Presented to the Chesapeake Bay Business and Professional Women. December 18, 1988.

Helping Children Cope with Crises. Presented to the Norfolk Public Schools Crisis Response Counselors. December 4, 1987.

Cycles of Deployment and How Deployment Affects Your Child. Presented to the public in cooperation with Navy News and Chesapeake General Hospital. June 30, 1987.

Communicating Effectively. Presented at the Navy Ombudsman Symposium: The Challenge of Helping Others. In cooperation with Eastern Virginia Medical School, Community Mental Health, and Navy Family Services Centers in Hampton Roads. May 16, 1987.

Military Sponsored Child Care. Presented at the Day Care Conference, Child Care: Everybody's Concern. Sponsored by Friends of Women's Studies at Old Dominion University and Tidewater Community College. February 7, 1987.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Boards

Candidate for Student/New Professional Representative, National Council on Family Relations. 1992.

Editorial

Reviewed: Kelly, G. E. *Sexuality Today: The Human Perspective*, Second Edition. Guilford, CT: The Dushkin Publishing Group. Fall 1990.

Reviewed and developed test questions: *Human Sexuality*, 3rd edition. Madison, WI: William C. Brown. Fall 1989 and Spring 1990.

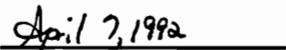
CROSS-CULTURAL EXPERIENCES

Rotary Exchange Student to Brazil, August 1978 to July 1979. Lived with four Brazilian families, attended public school, traveled throughout country.

Work-related travel: Spain, November 1987, November 1988, January 1989.



Karen R. Blaisure



Date