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Law of laughter (LOL)

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Graduate School of Education and Psychology

LAW OF LAUGHTER

(LOL)

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Yakov Smirnoff

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Farzin Madjidi, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Yakov Smirnoff

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PRELUDE - MOTIVATION FOR THIS RESEARCHER

It was a rainy Valentine's Day, and I dashed into a local florist to pick up a dozen red roses that I ordered for my wife. Then I stopped by the Wine Emporium to pick up the champagne I ordered. It was from the year Linda and I got married.

Holding the flowers and my champagne bottle, I jumped through the puddles on the sidewalk and stepped inside the beautiful building. As I am brushing off the water from my coat, I hear a voice from the hallway say "I love a man who is on time," and I looked up to see a smiling Linda. Wow!! She looked just as beautiful as she did on that Valentine's Day when I married her 12 years ago.

Linda ran over to me, and we hugged each other hard. "These are for you," I said handing her the roses. "Thank you so much," she replied, then she pointed at the champagne and asked me "what about that?" "O that's just for me," I answered, "but I guess I could share it."

Linda smiled at me as I brushed her cheek softly with my hand. "Happy Valentine's Day Linda." "Happy Valentine's Day to you too, Yakov."

Just then, an elegant young lady approached us and cheerfully asked, "How can I help you?" "We're the Smirnoff's," I said. She looked at her clipboard and said, "Yes, right this way please." I motion Linda to walk ahead of me. We followed the woman and were seated at a gorgeous table. "We will be right with you Mr. and Mrs. Smirnoff," the woman said and quickly walked away.

Linda gazed into my eyes and said "you look handsome in this suit" but before I could say thank you a well-dressed young man appeared and handed us each a folder.

"Hello Yakov and Linda" he intoned. "So are you two ready to sign the final divorce papers?" For the first time that day, Linda and I couldn't look each other in the eyes. We

nervously glanced around the lawyer's office and after an uncomfortable pause that seemed to last forever, I finally said, "Well, if Linda is ready, I guess I am too." Linda nodded solemnly.

The attorney handed each of us a pen, and we began signing. I've never felt such sadness in my entire life. Sadness so deep and profound that the only thing I could think to do was make a joke. "Look at the bright side Linda, we can still be really good friends. I'm not going to be sending checks to my other good friends." And for the first time, I heard Linda laugh. I said "Now there is something that I haven't heard in a long time. Whatever happened to the laughter we used to share?" Linda looked at me for a moment and seemed as though she might cry. I started to choke up as well.

So I simply looked down and concentrated on signing the rest of the divorce papers. We both finished signing in silence and handed the lawyer back his pens, although for what he was charging he could have let us keep the pens.

Linda stood up at the same time as I did. We hugged, though it was a quick one, almost out of obligation. Nothing like the warm embrace we had shared in the lobby only half an hour earlier.

Not wanting to be in the awkward position of walking out of the building at the same time as Linda, I hurriedly shook the lawyer's hand and exited myself. I strolled quickly through the lobby and headed back into the rain. But maybe it wasn't rain, I thought to myself. Maybe the tears were sent from heaven, so that my own tears, now streaming freely down my face, won't be so alone.

Shortly after that, my kids were staying with me for a weekend, and I was reading my daughter a bedtime story which ended with the words, "...and they lived happily ever after." My daughter looked at me with her big blues eyes and said, "Daddy, why didn't you and mommy

live happily ever after?" And I came up with a great answer… I said, "go to sleep" … but I couldn't sleep. I had to figure this out. So, I went to the University of Pennsylvania, got my Masters degree in Psychology and studied under Martin Seligman who is considered the father of Positive Psychology and wrote the book called *Authentic Happiness.* My contribution to this body of work on the pursuit of happiness was to determine why there was an abundance of laughter when I got married and yet when we got a divorce, the only people who were laughing were the attorneys. My personal quest became to figure out *where did the laughter go*?

VITA

Yakov Smirnoff, the legendary comedian known for emigrating from the Soviet Union and skyrocketing to the top of the comedy world in America in the 1980's, is earning his doctorate degree from Pepperdine's Graduate School of Education and Psychology on May 18th. His dissertation – and stand up -- on how laughter sustains human relationships and international diplomacy is both informative and hysterical. Dr. Yakov is available for interview and speaking opportunities. "He's a [expletive] good joke writer! Yakov Smirnoff is still slingin' it! He comes to the comedy store. He writes new material and it's good!" – Joe Rogan on *The Joe Rogan Experience*

After having reached every career milestone as a stand-up, Yakov refuses to slow down. With a full schedule of stand-up comedy dates, he has managed to find time to go back to school, earning his master's degree in psychology from the University of Pennsylvania and now his doctorate at Pepperdine not far from his home in Malibu, California. Yakov also has a home and theater in Branson, Missouri.

Dr. Yakov is an expert on laughter and laughter's impact on love. "Laughter is the GPS of the amount of love in a relationship. The more laughter, the more love," he says. Dr. Yakov's dissertation on the "Law of Laughter (LOL)" examines laughter's power to build and sustain human relationships. "I've devoted my life to teaching others how to share love and laughter, and I look forward to sharing my doctoral research on this subject in the coming weeks," says Dr. Yakov.

Filmography - <u>Actor</u>

2017   **Dice** (TV Series)

Yakov Smirnoff

- The Trial (2017) ... Yakov Smirnoff

2014   **The Comeback Kids** (TV Series)

Valdemar Steinberg

- To Hollywood with Love (2014) ... Valdemar Steinberg (rumored)

1993   **Major Dad** (TV Series)

Major Sacha Sarotsky

- From Russia with Like (1993) ... Major Sacha Sarotsky

1984-1990   **Night Court** (TV Series)

Yakov Korolenko

- The Glasnost Menagerie (1990) ... Yakov Korolenko
- Russkie Business (1988) ... Yakov Korolenko
- Dan's Escort (1986) ... Yakov Korolenko
- World War III (1985) ... Yakov Korolenko
- Some Like It Hot (1984) ... Yakov Korolenko

1989   **Up Your Alley**

Russian Man

1989   **D.C. Follies** (TV Series)

- Political Love Connection Profiles Arafat and Joan River's Dream Date (1989)

1986-1987   **What a Country** (TV Series)

Nikolai Rostapovich

- Old World Charmer (1987) ... Nikolai Rostapovich
- The Apartment (1987) ... Nikolai Rostapovich
- The Candidate (1987) ... Nikolai Rostapovich
- What Are Friends For? (1987) ... Nikolai Rostapovich
- We're in the Mubotos (1987) ... Nikolai Rostapovich

26 episodes total

1986   **Heartburn**

Contractor Laszlo

1986   **The Money Pit**

Shatov

1986   **The Love Boat** (TV Series)

Dmitri Kostov

- Daredevil/Picture Me a Spy/Sleeper (1986) ... Dmitri Kostov

1985   **It's a Living** (TV Series)
KGB Agent
-    From Russia with Love (1985) ... KGB Agent

1985   **Brewster's Millions**
Vladimir

1984   **The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension**
National Security Advisor

1984   **Moscow on the Hudson**
Lev

1983   **Scarecrow and Mrs. King** (TV Series)
Bela Pravik
- Sudden Death (1983) ... Bela Pravik

Writer

2016   **Yakov Smirnoff's Happily Ever Laughter : The Neuroscience of Romantic Relationships** (TV Special)

2004   **As Long as We Both Shall Laugh** (TV Movie)

Producer

2016   **Yakov Smirnoff's Happily Ever Laughter : The Neuroscience of Romantic Relationships** (TV Special)
(executive producer)

2004

                        As Long as We Both Shall Laugh (TV Movie)
(producer)

Self

2017   **KNEKT on the Carpet: Live from the 27th Annual 100 Stars Oscars Red Carpet** (TV Special)
Himself

2016   **WGN Morning News** (TV Series)
Himself
- Episode dated 7 November 2016 (2016) ... Himself
- Episode dated 2 November 2016 (2016) ... Himself

2016   **@midnight** (TV Series)
Himself / Himself - representing Russia
- Episode #4.12 (2016) ... Himself
- Episode #3.144 (2016) ... Himself - representing Russia

2016   **Home & Family** (TV Series)
Himself
- Yakov Smirnoff/Genneya Walton/Chloe Coscarelli (2016) ... Himself

2016   **Gotham Comedy Live** (TV Series documentary)
Himself - Host
- Yakov Smirnov (2016) ... Himself - Host (as Yakov Smirnov)

2016   **Dying Laughing** (Documentary)
Himself

2016   **Yakov Smirnoff's Happily Ever Laughter : The Neuroscience of Romantic Relationships** (TV Special)
Himself

2014   **Pioneers of Television** (TV Series documentary)
Himself
- Robin Williams Remembered (2014) ... Himself
-

2014   **The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson** (TV Series)
Himself
- Tom Lennon/Sarah Paulson/Yakov Smirnoff/Tony Deyo (2014) ... Himself

2013   **AXS Live** (TV Series)
Himself - Guest
- Episode #3.44 (2013) ... Himself - Guest

2013   **Awful Nice**
Himself

2012   **The Mystery Hour** (TV Series)
Himself
- Yakov Smirnoff/Kyle Lacy (2012) ... Himself

2009   **Great American Road Trip** (TV Series)
Himself - Guest Judge
- Gateway to the West (2009) ... Himself - Guest Judge

2005   **Cheap Seats: Without Ron Parker** (TV Series)
Himself
- Best of Cheap Seats (2005) ... Himself

2004   **Hollywood Squares** (TV Series)

Himself - Panelist

- Episode dated 2 April 2004 (2004) ... Himself - Panelist

- Episode dated 1 April 2004 (2004) ... Himself - Panelist

- Episode dated 31 March 2004 (2004) ... Himself - Panelist

- Episode dated 30 March 2004 (2004) ... Himself - Panelist

- Episode dated 29 March 2004 (2004) ... Himself – Panelist

2004   **As Long as We Both Shall Laugh** (TV Movie)

Himself

2002   **Jerry Lewis MDA Labor Day Telethon** (TV Series)

Himself

-    Telethon 2002 (2002) ... Himself

-

2002   **King of the Hill** (TV Series)

Himself

- The Bluegrass Is Always Greener (2002) ... Himself (voice)

2001   **E! True Hollywood Story** (TV Series documentary)

Himself

- The Comedy Store (2001) ... Himself

1993   **Montreal International Comedy Festival '93** (TV Movie)

Himself

1985-1991   **The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson** (TV Series)

Himself - Guest / Himself

- Episode #29.155 (1991) ... Himself - Guest

- Episode #29.86 (1991) ... Himself - Guest

- Dabney Coleman/Yakov Smirnoff (1990) ... Himself

- Episode #28.109 (1989) ... Himself - Guest

- Episode #27.64 (1988) ... Himself - Guest

8 episodes total

1990   **The Geraldo Rivera Show** (TV Series)

Himself

- Episode dated 3 July 1990 (1990) ... Himself

1990   **Bob Hope's USO Road to the Berlin Wall and Moscow** (TV Special)

Himself

1990   **The 16th Annual People's Choice Awards** (TV Special)

Himself - Introducing Speaker

1989   **George Burns - His Wit and Wisdom** (Video)
Himself

1989   **The Arsenio Hall Show** (TV Series)
Himself
-    Episode #1.75 (1989) ... Himself
-

1987-1989   **The New Hollywood Squares** (TV Series)
Himself - Panelist
- Episode dated 2 January 1989 (1989) ... Himself - Panelist
- Episode dated 23 May 1988 (1988) ... Himself - Panelist
- Episode dated 8 February 1988 (1988) ... Himself - Panelist
- Episode dated 23 November 1987 (1987) ... Himself – Panelist

1988   **Live! Dick Clark Presents** (TV Series)
Himself

1988   **Hope News Network** (TV Movie)
Himself

1988   **Hour Magazine** (TV Series)
Himself
-    Episode dated 4 May 1988 (1988) ... Himself

1988   **The 45th Annual Golden Globe Awards** (TV Special)
Himself – Presenter

1987   **We the People 200: The Constitutional Gala** (TV Special)
Himself - Performer

1985   **The 9th Annual Young Comedians Special** (TV Special)
Himself

1983   **The Bob Monkhouse Show** (TV Series)
Himself
- Episode #1.10 (1983) ... Himself (as Yakov Smirnov)

<u>Archive footage</u>
1989   **Not Necessarily the News** (TV Series)
Himself
- Episode #7.4 (1989) ... Himself

ABSTRACT

This dissertation derived from recognition that in the beginning of a romantic relationship people experience and remember a lot of laughter. If relationship ends there isn't any laughter. It has been proven by research that in the honeymoon stage hormones secreted in our body enhance our ability to meet each other's needs and provide a sense of well being to achieve the desired result, which would be procreation. Once that stage of the relationship is completed, Mother Nature stops supplying hormones like dopamine, oxytocin, and serotonin to help us in the process of creating happy and fun-filled relationships. The purpose of this investigation is to see if the formula that this scholar believes is the universal law of laughter will be supported by this research. The formula is: *Needs being met + Shared sense of humor = Laughter*.

As a professional comedian, I use this formula to gauge the connection, mood, and level of interest of my audience. The question is can laughter be used as a gauge to identify whether your partner's needs are met and the shared sense of humor triggered the laughter.

The research design for this study is a qualitative, phenomenological study using purposive sampling in the selection of the subjects, women who have been married for at least 3 years, were interviewed. The data gathering instruments were documents related to relationship needs, interviews, and researcher observations. Questions regarding strategies and practices of married couples when meeting each other's needs, challenges, measuring and tracking success, and recommendations were discussed with the subjects, analyzed, coded, and grouped in themes.

Chapter 1. Introduction

The Declaration of Independence states, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness" (US, 1776, para 2). The founding fathers created the constitution as a document to protect our life and liberty but did not define the pursuit of happiness. In 1943, American psychologist Abraham Maslow proposed that all humans seek to fulfill a hierarchy of needs. Researchers at the University of Illinois put Maslow's (1943) ideas to the test with data from 123 countries representing every major region of the world (Yates, 2011). According to University of Illinois professor emeritus of Psychology Ed Diener, Abraham Maslow established his theory of needs, but a question still remained as to where was the proof that supported the theory of needs (Yates, 2011). Dr. Diener found that students would learn Maslow's theory, but there was little scientific research mentioned to support this theory (Yates, 2011).

For additional insight and information, the researchers from the University of Illinois turned to the Gallup World Poll, which conducted surveys in 155 countries from 2005 to 2010, and included questions about money, food, shelter, safety, social support, feeling respected, being self-directed, having a sense of mastery, and the experience of positive or negative emotions (Mendes, 2011). Dr. Diener, who is also a senior scientist for the Gallup Organization, helped design the survey. The researchers found that fulfillment of a diversity of needs, as defined by Maslow, do appear to be universal and important to individual happiness (Yates, 2011).

When we are born, almost every need that we have, except for oxygen, is a dependency need (Meek, 2012). An infant is dependent on caregivers for food, comfort, care, etc. As we get

older, these needs change because we learn to provide some of these things for ourselves; however, as adults, there is still a universal set of relationship needs that remain (Meek, 2012).

Research has shown that these relationship needs are ideally met in the partnership where strong couples are able to be good companions, give verbal and physical affection, and provide emotional support (Meek, 2012). This dissertation tested the concept that happiness is when the needs of individuals who are in relationships are met. Through this study it was established that there are three elements to achieving and sustaining happiness: needs being met, shared sense of humor, and laughter. The idea behind this study was that if in a romantic relationship each person's needs are being met, and then happiness can be achieved. Taking this a step further, if in addition to needs being satisfied shared humor is used between partners, laughter occurs. Laughter can be viewed as confirmation that there is happiness in the relationship. An equation can be created to explain this concept in which laughter is the gauge to whether happiness is occurring in the relationship, more specifically within a marriage: *Needs Being Met + Shared sense of Humor = Laughter*.

Each of these elements was dissected to establish whether this concept could be proven. This was done through the use of research questions and interview questions with a group of women who have been married for at least 3 years. This researcher seeks to discover whether these three elements, put together in the correct order, can be used as a formula to help couples achieve and sustain a happy relationship.

The Needs of Men and Women

Dr. Willard Harley is a renowned marriage counselor and author of the national bestselling book entitled, *His Needs Her Needs* (2016). Dr. Harley stated that, if you care for someone the right way, you are aiming to meet his or her most important emotional needs

(Harley, 2016). What is an emotional need? It is a craving that, when satisfied, leaves you with a feeling of happiness and contentment, and, when unsatisfied, leaves you with a feeling of unhappiness and frustration (Harley, 2016).

Dr. Harley conducted some interesting research. After working with thousands of couples, he identified a list of the most common emotional needs. Then, he asked men to organize them in the order of importance. He asked women to do the same. What he discovered was that the top three needs of men and women were entirely different (Harley, 2016).

Women chose:

1. Affection
2. Conversation
3. Openness and honesty

Men chose:

1. Physical intimacy
2. Admiration
3. Recreational companion

Communication: **How Men and Women Communicate**

Everyone knows that boys and girls are not the same. As a matter of fact they're very different. The distinctions between genders, however, extend outside what the eye can see. Gregory L. Jantz Ph.D., a mental health expert and founder of the center *A Place of HOPE,* studied three primary areas of distinction in male and female brains: managing, construction, and activity (Jantz, 2014). These three components can be best understood through processing and structural differences.

Processing. When comparing the male brain to the female brain, the male brain has seven times more gray matter and the female brain has 10 times more white matter (Jantz, 2014). In other words, the gray matter areas of the brain are focused. They are evidence of achievement in a designated area of the brain. This can explain a narrow focus when men are involved in activities. When the male brain is fully engaged in a task or game, they may not exhibit much compassion to other people or their environments. White matter is the interacting grid that links the brain's gray matter and other neurological centers of the brain. This overpowering brain-processing difference is probably one reason why adult females are great multi-taskers, while men excel in highly task-focused projects. Girls tend to more quickly transition between tasks than boys (Jantz, 2014).

Structural differences. A number of structural elements in the human brain differ between males and females. *Structural* refers to actual parts of the brain and the way they are built, including their size and/or mass. Females often have a superior hippocampus, our memory center. Ladies also often have a higher thickness of neural influences into the hippocampus. As a result, girls and women tend to input or captivate more sensorial and sensitive information than males do. By *sensorial* we mean information to and from all five senses. The studies show that women *feel* a lot more than men do during the same amount of time (Goldman, 2017; Jantz, 2014; Price, 2017).

Moreover, before boys or girls are born, their brains grew with different hemispheric assignments of labor (Jantz, 2014). The right and left lobe of the male and female brains is set out very differently. For example, females tend to have oral centers on both sides of the brain, while males tend to have vocal centers on only the left lobe. This is a substantial difference. Females tend to use more words when discussing or telling a story, describing a person, object,

sensation, or place. Men not only have fewer verbal midpoints in general but also, often, have a quicker connection between their word centers and their memories or feelings. Girls have a tremendous advantage describing their feelings (Jantz, 2014).

Understanding Gender Differences

In society, the words *equal* and *the same* are interchangeable. When it comes to men and women, however, this is inaccurate. Men and Women are equal, but not the same. Scientists have proven that men and women are not the same. In 1998, Nirao Shah was a CalTech PhD who was a postdoctoral fellow at Columbia University studying sex-based differences in the brain (Goldman, 2017). When Dr. Shah became a professor at Stanford University, he continued his studies indicating that men and women are biologically, neurologically, psychologically, and sociologically different. Over the past 15 years or so, new technologies have generated a growing amount of evidence that there are inherent differences in how men and women's brains are wired and how they work. Not how well they work, mind you. These differences don't mean that one sex or the other is better or smarter or more deserving. Some researchers, more specifically, Dr. Nirao Shah (Stanford University), Dr. Diane Halpern (past president of the American Psychological Association and professor emerita of psychology at Claremont McKenna College), Catherine Dulac (Higgins Professor of Molecular and Cellular Biology in the Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology at Harvard and a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator), Joseph Bergan (postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University) and Yoram Ben-Shaul (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem) have studied differences in the brains of men and women and disproved stereotypes or being too quick to interpret human sex differences as biological rather than cultural (Bilimoria, 2014; Goldman, 2017; Jantz, 2014; Price, 2017). They counter, however, that data from animal research, cross-cultural surveys, natural experiments and

brain-imaging studies demonstrate real brain differences, and that these differences may contribute to differences in behavior and cognition (Goldman, 2017). "There is a dance, or a flow, of masculine and feminine energy that goes on between men and women. The masculine energy does the hunting, or the earning, so to speak, and the feminine does the receiving and the nurturing" (Sidell, 2011, p. 1).

It is important to understand that men and women are different. It is not just physical differences. There are emotional differences, hormonal differences, and neurological differences (Goldman, 2017; Jantz, 2014). These differences develop while we are in our mother's womb. Humans actually start out as females - physically and phenotypically speaking. When a man and a woman make a tiny human, they each provide 23 chromosomes. One pair of chromosomes helps to determine the baby's sex- two X chromosomes will create a female and an X chromosome from the mother and a Y chromosome from the father will create a male. The key here is that the Y chromosome doesn't kick in right away (Crew, 2015).

Embryonic development within the first five to six weeks after conception are attributed to the X chromosome alone where females grow from embryo to fully developed through the influence of only the X chromosome" (Crew, 2015). When it comes to males, after that five-or-six week period, a gene called the SRY gene will activate on the Y chromosome, and actively inhibit certain features of the X chromosome. It will also impose, through genetic dominance, male physiological traits such as the testicles. This means that if the SRY gene is not activated, the female phenotype and physical appearance - which means clitoris instead of penis - will persist. Nipples form before the activation of the SRY gene, during those fateful five-or-six weeks, which means we all get nipples, but only the females end up with breasts attached to them (Crew, 2015).

Dr. Helen Fisher is a professor of Anthropology from Rutgers University who has done a lot of research on the chemical reaction in the brain during the time when we fall in love. She explains that the neurotransmitter dopamine has the same effect on the brain as cocaine. She describes another hormone Oxytocin as a border-line-addictive bonding hormone that is released into our brain when partners are intimate. It's the same hormone that bonds a mother to her newborn baby and guarantees that she will be attached to the child (Fisher, Aron, & Brown, 2006).

Humor

Humor is a necessary tie that binds us to one another and reminds us that our relationships are designed to bring joy (Brittle, 2014). Jeffrey Hall, associate professor of communication studies at the University of Kansas offers four explanations for why humor is so important in finding partners:

1. Humor points to having a sociable and agreeable personality. "Part of what it means to be social is the ability to joke along with people,"

2. Men use humor to gauge if women are interested in them. "Men are trying to get women to show their cards. For some men it is a conscious strategy."

3. When men make jokes and women laugh, they may be performing a script in courtship. Men acting like jokers and women laughing alone may be part of it, too. "The script is powerful and it is enduring, and it dictates everything from asking someone out to picking up the tab," and

4. Humor is valuable for honor's sake. "Shared laughter might be a pathway toward developing a more long-lasting relationship," (Hall, 2015, p. 8).

Humor is a powerful repair technique that can lower the tension level of an argument, destroy the division between you and your partner, and remind you that you are human. It is also believed that bringing laughter into a relationship makes you human (Brittle, 2014).

Laughter, a Gauge to Happiness

Laughter was given to us when we were born, unlike other learned behavior. Think about how many things we have to be trained to do: walk, talk, read, write, ride a bicycle. Laughter is like breathing and a heartbeat; it's factory installed. However, the baby needs to be happy before it can laugh. Think about this: If a baby is hungry and crying, it's not going to laugh. But when a baby's needs are met and the baby is happy again, and you tickle the baby, what is the baby going to do? Laugh. Adult humans are the same and if our needs are met and we're happy and someone tickles us, we laugh. In fact, in the Navajo tradition, a baby's first laugh is celebrated by a special ceremony (Lee, 2016). The belief behind the tradition is that when a baby is born, she belongs to two worlds: the spirit world and the physical one. The first laugh is seen as a sign of the baby's desire to leave the spirit world and join her earthly family and community. Perhaps it was because of the fragility of new life that infants were treated as still *between worlds* for those delicate first few months, until parents heard a sign of joy and wellbeing that reassured them that their baby was healthy enough to survive (Lee, 2016).

When couples laugh, researchers say that the joy and laughter gives them confidence and encourages them to keep going in the relationship. It's an auditory confirmation that the lovers are happy. When couples make each other happy, laughter reassures us them that they are on the right track. The reason that happens so effortlessly is because nature has one objective, it wants to procreate. So when people experience the feeling of falling in love, they are under the influence of feel good chemicals, which are released in the brain(s) (Fisher, Aron, & Brown,

2006). When you are falling in love and hormones are raging, your significant other becomes the most important person in your life; and you go the extra mile to make them happy by meeting their needs (Fisher, Aron, & Brown, 2006). That is why there's so much laughter during that time. They become your highest priority, at the top of the list – and then as life goes on, they slide down to the bottom.

       Laughter dies in many romantic relationships. Everyone remembers laughter during the honeymoon stage of his or her relationship. This is where people are high on hormones that bring joy and happiness. Laughter is a byproduct of that. It happens when people fall in love. Research from the University of Kansas, based on the pairings of 51 random heterosexual men and women, found that women preferred men who make them laugh and that men want an audience (Bova, 2018). It likely has something to do with the theory of sexual selection noted by Charles Darwin, whom in the 1800s, came up with the theory while studying peacocks. Darwin observed that female peacocks' requirements for a mate went beyond reproductive equipment. The female peacocks are greatly influenced by male displays of brightly colored feather tails and assessing other males in order to select the right mate (Bova, 2018). Mother Nature's design is to help female peacocks identify the right partner with good genes and is capable of producing healthy offspring. As female peacocks look at brightly plumed male peacocks to determine whether he is a good match for her, human females also assess men in different ways to determine who may be a perfect match. In the human realm, a guy also showcases his qualities like his good looks, his bank account, and his sense of humor that will attract a mate convincing her that spending time with him will be worth it.

       When you laugh, endorphins, the body's natural painkillers, get released to the brain, and you're flooded with euphoric feelings. A woman on the hunt for a mate will subconsciously

imagine that a future with this guy will be euphoric too. So if we break out our Darwinian calculators, we find that a funny guy equals brainy guy equals successful guy equals guy who will be a good father and provider (Bova, 2018). When a couple is laughing together, within a split second they feel that they are meeting each other's needs: he feels admired, and she feels joy. It seems like there are many funny men who are happily attached to women who may be considered out of their league. Such examples, are model Beth Ostrowski and Howard Stern, concert pianist Natasha Rubin and Cheech Marin, and Woody Allen and Mia Farrow. Some people may make assumptions that if a man has the wit, creativity, and ability to make a woman laugh, then he must also be intelligent. If a woman thinks a man is smart, she may be open to the idea of procreating with him because that means the combination of his DNA and her DNA will produce smart children. We've been hard wired this way since caveman times, writes Gil Greengross (2018), an evolutionary psychologist, who observes that intelligent men are more likely to succeed and accrue goods, whether they're top hunters or killer Quant analysts. The more successful a man is, the more attractive he becomes, which is seen in every society in the world (Bova, 2018).

The reason that paying attention to laughter is important is because, just like a gas gauge in the car lets you know how much gas you have in your tank, laughter lets you know how much happiness you have in your relationship. For someone to create laughter, telling a joke is a predictable formula; Set up + punch line = laughter. A similar formula applies to the creation of laughter in your relationship. Instead of the set up, it is meeting your partner's emotional needs and instead of a punch line, it's applying your sense of humor, which results in laughter. Most people do it effortlessly during the honeymoon stage under the influence of hormones. This researchers quest is to figure out how to do it consciously.

No laughter, no intimacy leads to divorce. Research from University of Kansas is showing that a majority of females are attracted to men who made them laugh (Hall, 2015). The key is laughing with someone, not at them. "In general, couples who laugh more together tend to have higher quality relationships," said Laura Kurtz, a social psychologist from the University of North Carolina who studied the phenomenon (Bova, 2018, p. 51; Kurtz & Algoe, 2015, p. 581). When we laugh and smile, as mentioned above, a neurotransmitter is released, increasing activity in our brain's pleasure center. Our bodies have physical reactions similar to those we experience when having sex: uncontrolled facial movements, raised body temperatures and more sensitive skin. It's kind of like a two-for-one special. What better prescription for sexual chemistry? (Bova, 2018).

Problem Statement

Psychology today magazine recently published the following statistics: 50% of first marriages, 67% of second, and 73% of third marriages end in divorce (Banschick, 2012). This research seeks to understand the connection between love and laughter, which could possibly change this predicament. The latest research in the science of happiness reveals that when there is a genuine connection between people, laughter is the first thing that happens as a confirmation of a happy relationship. The intimacy comes next and then people get married and live together. When things are not working, laughter is the first thing to go. The second thing to go is intimacy and the third is the relationship.

During the dating stage we want to stay connected to our partner and we do those things unconsciously. But later on we get distracted with other activities. United States Bureau of Labor Statistics did a survey, interviewed 26,000 American couples, and asked them how they spend their time. Below are the results of this survey.

- How much time do we sleep on the average; 7.2 hours a day.

- How much time do we work; 8.5 hours a day.

- How much time do we watch television; 2.4 hours a day.

The last question that they asked was:

- How much time are we intimate with each other, combining hugging, kissing, cuddling, foreplay and lovemaking; It was one-minute per day!

During the dating stage, people say *we have chemistry with another person* because it's literally true! Love actually gives a *high* feeling. If people want to create the happiness and laughter that they experienced during the dating stage, deliberately, they need to figure out what they did right and repeat it intentionally…and then they can live happily ever laughter.

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the strategies and practices married couples use to meet each other's needs. In addition to the strategies and practices in meeting the needs of partners, the challenges and issues that married couples have regarding their needs were uncovered and discussed. Because the individuals who were a part of the interview process have been married for at least three years, the researcher questioned how these individuals measure success in their relationship and asked about recommendations that they may have to help other married couples who may be having challenges or issues surrounding unmet needs. Throughout this process, the concept of needs being met + shared sense of humor = laughter was examined through each interview to see if the formula can be used to distinguish whether happiness is found in relationships that contain need satisfaction and humor with laughter becoming the gauge of happiness. The goal at the end of the research was to offer

effective solutions or recommendations on how to rekindle the happiness that was found when couples first met by examining the needs, humor, and laughter in their relationship.

Research Questions

The following research questions (RQ) were addressed in this study.

RQ1 – What strategies and practices do married couples use to meet each other's needs?

RQ2 – What challenges do married couples face in their effort to meet each other's needs?

RQ3 – How do married couples measure and track success in meeting each other's needs?

RQ4 – What recommendations would married couples give to future married couples in meeting each other's needs?

Significance of the Study

Until your unconscious becomes conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate (Jung, 1949). This Law of Laughter dissertation is intended to help everyone who is in a relationship turn unconscious actions into conscious and intentional interactions by satisfying the needs of others and by adding humor and gauging the success of the relationship by listening for the laughter or lack of it. The ingredients that are creating laughter are hidden. Everyone experiences that, but very few can sustain it and repeat it. Once they have this research and the recognition of what it entails to create laughter or the environment for laughter, they will be able to use it in any aspect of their lives. This study will present, to those who read this, some strategies that will help couples bring more happiness and laughter back into their relationships. It will also help single people who are searching for that special someone by recognizing their capacity to meet their needs and whether they have a matching sense of humor. It can also help

marriage counselors, clergy who work with couples, relationship coaches, and individuals themselves who are seeking knowledge about achieving and sustaining happiness in relationships. I would like the dissertation to be read by high school teachers who can help our future generation understand the mechanics of successful love relationships and parents who want their children to be happy. Meeting needs and incorporating humor and lightheartedness will create laughter, which can be a gauge for individuals to meet the needs of others.

Assumptions of the Study

The assumption of this study was for the researcher to find evidence that the honeymoon stage for couples was so long ago that they may not be able to understand how to get the happiness back in their relationships. It is important to note that without conscious recognition of what the problems may be, the relationship will fall apart. Other assumptions that the researcher made focused on the needs of men and women, relationships, and laughter being a gauge regarding the success of their relationships. There was an assumption that the participants would be intelligent and would dive into the relationship analysis. This researcher believed that the participants would be objective about their relationships, and that they would be excited to explore this topic. They were free to express their feelings in a comfortable and safe learning environment. The assumptions about their relationships were that they would be comfortable in their marriages, but that they were not growing, especially if they had been married for a long time. Also, that laughter and fun were probably very rare. It was assumed that once the subjects heightened their awareness to the differences of a new style of communicating with one another, it would increase the rate of success and open a different channel that would prevent partners from clashing and arguing. It was anticipated that the awareness of this study would dramatically

improve their personal relationships. This knowledge would provide the keys to a treasure chest of conscious happiness.

Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this study is that the research was conducted with people who have been married for at least three years. The focus was not on singles who are looking for a partner or to be in a relationship. Only women were interviewed for this study. This research will focus on the female perspective of the relationship.

Definition of Terms

Happiness. To relate to life satisfaction, appreciation of life, moments of pleasure, but overall it has to do with the positive experience of emotions (Khoddam, 2015).

Needs. A need is a necessity or requirement for your emotional health (Strachowski, 2015).

Humor. The quality of being amusing or comic, especially as expressed in literature or speech (English Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2018).

Laughter. An inner quality, mood, disposition, etc., suggestive of laughter; mirthfulness. An expression or appearance of merriment or amusement. A subject or matter for amusement (World Reference, 2018).

Social exchange theory. Social exchange suggests that it is the valuing of the benefits and costs of each relationship that determine whether or not we choose to continue a social association (Bradbury & Kamey, 2014; Cherry, 2018).

Emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence, as we describe it, is the capacity to reason about emotions and emotional information, and of emotions to enhance thought (Mayer, 2009).

Conscious. **1.** Aware of and responding to one's surroundings; **2.** Having knowledge of something; **3.** (of an action or feeling) deliberate and intentional (English Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2018).

Unconscious. Not consciously held or deliberately planned or carried out (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

Chapter Summary

This study was meant to explain the bigger picture of our constitutional right to the pursuit of happiness as a constantly evolving process. Laughter can be used as a gauge of happiness, and within this study, there was a specific formula: *needs being met + shared sense of humor = shared laughter*, that was proposed as a gauge of happiness. When couples are able to meet each other's needs, with a sense of humor added, they can create an environment in which laughter can spontaneously combust as evidence that there is happiness in this relationship. In each aspect of a romantic relationship, this awareness will not guarantee success, but lack of this knowledge can lead to relationship challenges that were explored. In addition to discussing how success is measured in a relationship, advice was offered for couples to achieve and sustain happiness in their marriage.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

Over the last 75 years, western culture has created a major shift in gender dynamics.
From the statistical rise in the divorce rate to modern physical and emotional encounters, there
are staggering and significant changes and challenges in relationships that should not be
overlooked. They are stealth and silent as they underline and significantly contribute to the
challenges successful women have in intimate relationships. Once these challenges are exposed,
women may be open to exploring alternative choices in their romantic relationships.

Throughout this literature review, these three concepts were explored:

- Needs being met,

- Shared sense of humor, and

- Shared laughter.

These concepts were tested as to whether happiness can be achieved and sustained in a
relationship when *needs are met + shared sense of humor = shared laughter*. In this study,
laughter was proposed as a gauge of happiness. One aspect of a social context that may have
independent signal value regarding the quality of the relationship between two people is when
they are laughing simultaneously (Kurtz & Algoe, 2015). This specific manifestation of laughter
may avoid complexities associated with interpreting the cause of or intentions behind the laugh,
while retaining the valuable social information one can only observe when considering the
complete dyad (Kurtz & Algoe, 2015).

Theoretical framework – Social Exchange Theory

The social exchange theory, as developed by sociologist George Homans (2015), focuses
on the outcomes of relationships (Bradbury & Kamey, 2014; Cherry, 2018). It suggests that
relationship partners focus on the positive outcomes (rewards) and negative outcomes (costs) of

their relationships (Cherry, 2018). Rewards include social rewards and material rewards. Costs include opportunity costs. According to this theory, people evaluate their relationships both in terms of actual rewards and costs and in terms of anticipated rewards and costs (Bradbury & Kamey, 2014; Cherry, 2018).

People evaluate their relationship outcomes based on their comparison level and their comparison level for alternatives (Cherry, 2018). Comparison level refers to the outcomes that people think they deserve, or can expect to get, in a relationship (Cherry, 2018). Comparison level for alternatives refers to the outcomes that people think they could get if they were to enter a different relationship (Cherry, 2018). People with a low comparison level and low comparison level for alternatives tend to have a high level of dependency on their relationship and may feel unable to leave (Bradbury & Kamey, 2014; Cherry, 2018).

Drigotas and Rusbult (1992) introduced a model of breakup decisions that proposed that extends interdependence theory. This *dependence model asserts* that the primary issue in understanding breakup decisions is degree of dependence on a relationship. Dependence is great when important outcomes in the current relationship are not available elsewhere. *Need satisfaction dependence* measures identify important needs in a relationship and compare satisfaction of those needs in the current relationship to satisfaction in alternative relationships. Two longitudinal studies provide good support for the dependence model. Need satisfaction dependence measures significantly differentiated between subjects who remained in their relationships and those who voluntarily broke up. The studies also compared the model to simpler breakup models and assessed whether commitment mediates the link between dependence and breakup decisions (Drigotas & Rusbult, 1992).

Alternatives are broadly construed. They include, not just alternative relationships, but

alternatives to being in a relationship. They also include all the consequences someone might face for leaving his or her relationship. These include losing investments that have been put into the relationship, social disapproval for leaving the relationship, and other factors that make people feel unable to leave, no matter how much they might want to. Commitment is a product of satisfaction and dependence. Commitment, defined as the intention to remain in a relationship, is comprised of the desire to stay and the inability to leave (Bradbury & Kamey, 2014; Cherry, 2018).

Emotional intelligence enhances one's ability to forecast future relationships and increases their chances of success through conscious decision making (Goleman, 2006). Through research and in-depth studying of emotional intelligence in reference to personal relationships, a hypothesis can be surmised that through the facilitation of experience-driven improvements, one can use emotional intelligence, based on past memory processes, to affect decision-making and forecasting which will give people an advantage in their quest for a successful relationship (Goleman, 2006). With any relationship, there is always the possibility that memories surrounding emotional circumstances can significantly alter reality (Meyvis, Ratner, & Levav, 2010; Wilson et al., 2001).

Needs Being Met

In the article, Intimacy and Need Fulfillment in Couple Relationships, by Karen Prager from the School of Behavioral and Brain Science at University of Texas a questionnaire completed by 154 commuter university students measured their well being within the Need Fulfillment Inventory (NFI), a new paper-and-pencil test that assessed the argentic and communal dimensions of need fulfillment (Prager & Buhrmester, 1998). Results from study 1 showed positive correlations between both argentic and communal need fulfillment and well

being. For the second study, 133 cohabiting couples were asked to complete the NFI, two measures of relational intimacy, five measures of well-being, and to keep a daily record of their interactions for a week. Factor analyses of the daily record data revealed three dimensions of verbally intimate interaction: positive affective tone, daily self-disclosure, and listening and understanding. Results supported the notion that relational intimacy, assessed globally and as a characteristic of the couples' daily interactions, is positively associated with individual need fulfillment. Self-disclosure impact on need fulfillment was found to vary as a function of the other dimensions of intimacy present in the interactions. The pattern of moderation between self-disclosure and other dimensions of intimacy was not exactly as predicted, however; sometimes, self-disclosure may soften the detrimental effects of negative interactions on need fulfillment. Finally, the meditational hypothesis was mostly supported, which indicates that intimacy relationship to psychological well-being is most likely accounted for by its effects on individual need fulfillment (Prager & Buhrmester, 1998).

According to Le and Agnew (2001), relationship need fulfillment was conceptualized as analogous to the outcome of goal completion within relationships, and fulfillment of needs was hypothesized to predict emotional experience. Daily self-reports of emotional experience and relationship needs were collected across four days from 119 participants involved in romantic relationships (Le & Agnew, 2001). Fulfillment of relationship needs was found to correlate with emotional experience. Furthermore, need fulfillment expectancies moderated the emotion – fulfillment relationship. In addition, participants in relationships characterized by an inequality of dependence experienced more negative emotion (and less positive emotion) in their relationship than did participants in mutually dependent partnerships. Relationship

interdependence and theoretical models describing the production of emotion are discussed (Le & Agnew, 2001).

Clark and Mills (2001) state that close romantic relationships are communal relationships and have used that term in previous writings. That is, a close romantic relationship is a relationship in which each member has a concern for the welfare of the other (Clark & Mills, 2001). In a communal relationship, benefits are given to the other when that other has a need for the benefit or to show concern for the other. Members provide each other with help of many kinds, including providing resources, information, and companionship, sometimes because the other has a specific need for those things and sometimes just to show they care for the other. Members of a communal relationship are motivated to provide benefits to the other without expecting a specific benefit in return, as would be the case in an exchange relationship (Clark & Mills, 2001). Clark and Mills refer to a *benefit* as something that one person intentionally gives or does for another person that is of use to them.

An important aspect of communal relationships is that they vary in strength, which refers to the degree of motivation to be responsive to the other's needs (Clark & Mills, 2001). For instance, if a person asks a stranger for the time of day and the stranger responds by stating the time without expecting anything in return, that would constitute a very weak communal relationship. The cost of providing the benefit (looking at one's watch and stating the time) is minimal, requiring very weak motivation. We assume close romantic relationships are strong communal relationships in which there is a very high degree of motivation to be responsive to the other person's needs and thus willingness to incur large costs to meet the other's needs. Communal relationships can be one-sided, such as the relationship between a parent and an infant. We assume that close romantic relationships are mutual communal relationships. In a

strong mutual communal relationship, both partners have a high degree of motivation to be responsive to the other's needs (Clark & Mills, 2001).

Strategies to Meet Each Other's Needs

Gaining clarity on what your personal needs are, what your marital needs are as well as how and where to get your needs met has a huge impact on the direction you take in your marriage (Gadoua, 2009). Once you know and understand your needs, some couples can take action to meet them (Gadoua, 2009). Whatever issues were causing the problems can be addressed (Gadoua, 2009). For others, uncovering your needs may highlight that your spouse is unwilling or incapable of meeting them (Gadoua, 2009). When people have needs that are not being met in the marriage, they either go without and suffer or get their needs met somewhere else (Gadoua, 2009). It is not realistic or even healthy to expect your spouse to meet all of your needs (Gadoua, 2009).

Love needs are part of the basic needs rather than the psychological needs. Moreover, within the basic needs category, love needs precede the safety needs in importance (Oved, 2017). The idea that one is typically less concerned with security and safety is reiterated in Maslow's writing.

Maslow acknowledges that "the peaceful, smoothly running, 'good' society ordinarily makes its members feel safe enough from wild animals, extremes of temperature, criminals, assault and murder and tyranny" and hence "the need for safety is seen as an active and dominant mobilizer of the organism's resources only in emergencies" (as cited in Oved, 2017, p. 537).

This assertion needs to be extended. It is not only in *good* societies that one is less engaged with issues of safety needs, but love is an important prerequisite for a feeling of safety

both in materially secure modern societies and in primitive and dangerous societies. This is to generalize that one is more concerned with her intimate relationships with spouses, friends and family members, than with her physical safety (Oved, 2017).

Relating marriage to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), author and licensed clinical social worker Susan Pease Gadoua (2009) formed the Marital Hierarchy of Needs, which breaks down as follows:

1. Marriage Survival Needs: legally married (in the eyes of the State or Church), have a mutual agreement to be married, live in the same house or at least have regular contact with your spouse. To be in survival mode, you don't have to love or even like your spouse, you simply need to maintain your status as married.

2. Marriage Safety Needs: To feel safe with each other, you take care of and provide comfort to one another, create a home, have financial security, mutual trust, mutual honesty, protect one another physically, mentally and emotionally, and create an abuse-free environment within the marriage.

3. Marriage Love Needs: Mutual love is an obvious requirement to have a marriage that operates from this level. Kindness, compassion, companionship, intimacy, affection, sex (love-making) are also important factors here.

4. Marriage Esteem Needs: To reach this level, you need to have self-esteem and esteem of your spouse, mutual respect, honoring of commitments.

5. Marriage Actualization Needs: Because the lower needs have been met, one or both spouses can support each other to reach respective goals, each can sacrifice their own needs (to a healthy degree) for the bigger picture, they have maturity, they maintain a healthy balance in life, each feels a sense of fulfillment in life and they give back to the community (Gadoua, 2009).

Placing love needs before safety needs clarifies innumerable examples of people who have endangered their lives –or, to use Maslow's terms, have voluntarily cast aside their safety needs – for the chance of keeping their beloved, be they friends, lovers or family members, from harm (Ovid, 2017). This veneration of human selflessness and sacrifice has been celebrated and perpetuated across disparate societies for millennia (Ovid, 2017). It is illustrated in the Greek mythological story of Orpheus who takes a fearsome journey to the underworld to try and bring his lover Eurydice back; in the Christian idea of loving your wife "just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25, New International Version); and in the tale of Anarkali who agrees to be entombed alive to save her beloved Salim (Ovid, 2017; Sharar, 1913).

It was found that marital need satisfaction was significantly related to sex, amount of contact with children, perception of happiest period of life, self-perceived happiness of marriage, perception of whether own marriage has improved or worsened over time, and morale (Stinnett, Collins, & Montgomery, 1970). Harley (2016) describes the different needs that women and men have in a relationship. They are as follows:

Men's five most basic needs from his wife:

- o Sexual fulfillment
- o Recreational companionship
- o An attractive spouse
- o Domestic support
- o Admiration

Women's five most basic needs from her husband:

- o Affection

- o Conversation

- o Openness and honesty

- o Financial security

- o Family commitment (Harley, 2016, p. 1).

If our partners are unwilling to meet our needs, the relationship cannot thrive. If we are unwilling to meet our partner's needs, the outcome remains the same.

Love without respect is dangerous; it can crush the other person, sometimes literally. To respect is to understand that the other person is *not* you, not an extension of you, not a reflection of you, not your toy, not your pet, not your product. In a relationship of respect, your task is to understand the other person as a unique individual and learn how to mesh your needs with his or hers and help that person achieve what he or she wants to achieve. Your task is *not* to control the other person or try to change him or her in a direction that you desire but he or she does not (Gray, 2012, p. 2).

Pratt (2014) says that it is important to have good communication within a relationship. Some of the following examples of communicating well with your partner are mentioned according to Pratt (2014):

1. Active Listening / Use Feedback: Active Listening involves making a concerted effort to slow down and listen with an open heart and mind.

2. Edit Criticism: When communicating with your partner, make a concerted effort to avoid personal criticism, which includes refraining from put-downs, insults and negative body language, such as eye-rolling.

3. Be Gentle: When something is bothering you, bring it up gently and without blame. Be aware of the tone used when communicating problems.

4. Seek First to Understand vs. Being Understood: Healthy relationships involve understanding one another, but rather than emphasizing your own desire to be heard, try changing your focus to putting attention on understanding the other.

5. Ask Open-Ended Questions: Ask open-ended questions when you have concerns.

6. Stay Calm: Try to keep discussions as calm as possible. If things start to escalate, take a break and re-visit when the two of you feel less emotionally charged.

7. Use *I* statements: Try to own your feelings, by using *I* statements when communicating (e.g., I feel, I need, I want).

8. Self-soothing: Find ways to soothe yourself when upset. Conversations will be much more productive when emotions are more balanced.

9. Accept Influence from the Other: Try to put yourself in your spouse's shoes and be willing to go with their perspective and suggestions. Be mindful of the gender dynamics in your relationship that may foster or inhibit the ability to influence one another.

10. Share Appreciations: In any good relationship, each person will feel that they are valued and respected for who they are. When communicating, it can be helpful to identify what you appreciate about the other and state those things. (Pratt, 2014, p. 1-3).

Recommendations for Successful Marriages and Relationships

Willard F. Harley, Jr. has eight tips for couples to help build their marriage relationship.

1. Getting the benefit of the doubt

2.   Going the extra mile

3.   Falling in love daily

4.   Unwinding together

5.   Embracing your differences

6.   His needs and her needs could be the little things

7.   Respect and love

8.   Optimism and reassurance (Harley, 2016, p. 1).

According to the Gottman Institute's Money Conflict Blueprint (2016), the following list is of ways to successfully accept your partner's needs and manage conflict in committed relationships:

- Communicate that you understand your partner's need and why it's important to them,

- Reiterate why tending to this is important to you,

- Be clear on your own boundaries and limits in meeting the need,

- Communicate what your partner can expect from you going forward, and

- Check back with your partner that they understand your limits and are ok with them.

It is important to take your partner's needs into account while expressing yours. If you don't communicate this, you run the risk of your partner thinking that you stopped caring, that their needs are only a priority when it's convenient for you, or some other unintended message. Sometimes, your needs will conflict with one another and you are going to have to talk about it, negotiate it, and come to a compromise together.

Relationships thrive when needs are met and falter when they are not. That fact is non-negotiable (Gray, 2017). As reported by Stony Brook University psychologist K. Daniel O'Leary (2012) and his research team, the findings provided a stark contrast to the typically

gloomy view we have of long-term marriages. Rather than being doomed to a bland, mediocre existence, these couples endorsed their positive feelings toward their spouses with enthusiasm (Krauss Whitbourne, 2012). Forty percent of those married 10 years or more stated that they were *very intensely in love*—the highest rating on the love-intensity scale (Krauss Whitbourne, 2012). Another 15 percent gave their marriages the second-highest rating on the love-intensity scale (Krauss Whitbourne, 2012). Perhaps even more surprisingly, those who stayed together for 30 years and more also gave their marriages high ratings with 40 percent of women and 35 percent of men saying that they were very intensely in love (Krauss Whitbourne, 2012). It seems that many couples are able to maintain high levels of passion as the decades go by well into their middle and later years.

Not everyone felt the same degree of intensity about his or her spouses. The researchers turned next to trying to predict which relationships would be marked by the strongest degree of intensity (Krauss Whitbourne, 2012). Psychological theories of love focus on such quintessential features as passion, commitment, closeness, early experiences in relationships, emotional needs, and ability to communicate (Krauss Whitbourne, 2012). These are, of course, important to the health of any relationship, however, when it comes down to predicting which relationships will make it for the long haul, the questions become almost equally pragmatic as romantic (Krauss Whitbourne, 2012). There are 12 key dimensions that couples should focus on in their relationship:

1. Thinking positively about your partner. Having positive thoughts about your partner means that you focus on the good, not the bad, in your partner's personal qualities and character.

2. Thinking about your partner when apart.

3. Difficulty concentrating on other things when thinking about your partner.

4. Enjoying novel and challenging activities. Spending time together is important, but it is how you spend your time that influences your relationship satisfaction even more, especially when they spend their time together exploring new and challenging activities.

5. Spending time together. If you love someone, you want to spend time with that person, and the more time you spend together, the more your love will grow.

6. Expressing affection. Feeling love toward your partner is important, but so is expressing that love in physical ways.

7. Being turned on by your partner. Those tiny touches of affection can not only boost your emotional connection to your partner, but also stoke the sexual fires within.

8. Engaging in sexual intercourse. It should come as no surprise that having intercourse is a positive expression of a love's intensity. People in love are more likely to have sex with each other on a regular basis.

9. Feeling generally happy. People who feel happier about life also have stronger feelings of love toward their partners.

10. Wanting to know where your partner is at all times. Being intensely in love, for men, is associated with wanting to know your partner's whereabouts.

11. Obsessively thinking about your partner. Being slightly obsessed with your partner turns out to be positively related to intense love, at least for women.

12. Having a strong passion for life. People who approach their daily lives with zest and strong emotion seem to carry these intense feelings over to their love life as well. If you want your relationship to have passion, put that emotional energy to work in your hobbies, interests, and even your political activities. Your brain's reward centers respond

similarly to love as to getting excited about your other daily interests. Getting 'fired up' in these areas of life translates into firing up the feelings you have toward your partner and seemed to matter more for men (Krauss Whitbourne, 2012, p. 3-5).

The study by the O'Leary team (2012), in identifying these 12 factors, provides new evidence to show that not only can long-term couples get along with each other, but they can maintain their passion for many decades. Close relationships are the centerpiece of our sense of identity and are fundamental to our feelings of fulfillment. By changing your thoughts and your behavior about these relationships, you can keep them fresh and vital for years (Krauss Whitbourne, 2012).

Willard F. Harley, PhD has created a list of tips for couples to build an affair-proof marriage (2016). Below are his advice and tips for marital success:

1. Getting the benefit of the doubt is one of His Needs Her Needs: If your partner does something that offends you, such as, break their promise to take you out on a date, stayed out too late, you noticed them conversing for quite a long time with some lady or man, was suppose to help you with some task, but didn't or simply didn't do something they gave their word on, and you are yet to hear his or her explanation for your observation, do not conclude on something negative, but give him or her the benefit of the doubt to explain their reasons. By doing this, you are meeting one of his needs, her needs, which is to be heard out. So exercise some patience. Do this next time (Harley, 2016).

2. Going the extra mile can be meeting one of His Needs Her Needs: Taking time and putting in a little extra effort to do more than your spouse requested and expects, more often than not, meets some of his needs or her needs that were unspoken. These little extras could be so

appreciated, you won't believe it. Just imagine how it would feel if you were at the receiving end. Isn't it a wonderful feeling that of your own accord, you decided to do a little more than requested or expected? So, whenever you have the opportunity to lend a helping hand, take some time to think of how you could go the extra mile for your sweetheart (Harley, 2016).

3. Falling in love daily meets one of His Needs Her Needs: You can keep your marriage relationship with your partner really fresh and vibrant by falling in love with him or her on a daily basis. Things like taking turns to plan date nights on a regular basis and mixing in activities that you know are some of his or her favorites, would really make date nights something to anticipate with pure delight. Also, having new things to do each date night will keep this time together fresh and full of suspense. Everyone appreciates a pleasant surprise whenever one is given, so keep that in mind as you think of unique and creative things to do. The primary goal here is to spend *quality time* together, where you're doing just about anything, which might be one of his needs, her needs (Harley, 2016).

4. Unwinding together is one of His Needs Her Needs: After a long day of job responsibilities or getting lost in the hectic world of work and catering to family commitments, spending time together to unwind or decompress after dinner and before bedtime, is a great way of connecting and bringing back those affectionate feelings for each other. Discussing the good, the bad and ugly events of the day is something you should consider an important way to end your day (Harley, 2016).

5. His Needs Her Needs - satisfied by Embracing Your Differences: They say it is usually the unique traits of your partner that attracted you to them at first, that ends up driving you crazy. Now, that does not have to be the case when we learn to embrace their differences,

love those differences and express our appreciation of the fact that he or her is different in that way from us, and that we are not embarrassed and never will be ashamed or put down by their uniqueness. It could be the way they laugh, walk, talk or react to situations. A sense of security is established in their heart, knowing you have fully embraced who they are and have no plans of getting them to change. Admiring his or her differences can help your marriage relationship remain interesting (Harley, 2016).

6. His Needs Her Needs Could Be The Little Things: Just a little more of something, sometimes makes a lot of impact. It could be a simple touch, such as a gentle squeeze of a shoulder or arm as you pass by your mate. This will usually be well appreciated, as it conveys a meaningful message of love and caring. Do this sometimes, and you will be satisfying one of his needs, her needs. Also, simply expressing appreciation for a kind, selfless gesture done, such as, when he opens your door, or when he or she hands you a plate, or similar acts of kindness, should be followed with a kind word of appreciation, which shows we notice and appreciate the little things, and that speaks volumes of our sense of respect and politeness (Harley, 2016).

7. His Needs Her Needs: Respect and Love: For a man, respect is the most important thing he values and for a woman, love is the most important thing to her. And so, if a man senses his wife was being disrespectful, he will react in an unloving matter. On the other hand, when a woman senses her husband has just acted unloving, she will react in a disrespectful manner, and the cycle will continue. To break the cycle, you will have to go out of your way to respond differently. Men will have to respond lovingly even after sensing disrespect, and women will have to respond respectfully, even after sensing an unloving attitude. This will

end the cycle and get the respect and love flowing again. As you do this today, you will be

undoubtedly meeting his needs, her needs (Harley, 2016).

8. His Needs Her Needs: Optimism and Reassurance: It is always astonishing to see how

pessimistic people can be sometimes. When they walk into a room, you can feel the

depression or despondency. On the other hand, when a person who tends to be appreciative,

hopeful, and confident about the future or the success of something, walks into the room,

you feel your spirit or confidence raised by their presence. Both of these feelings are brought

back to one's mind long after the person leaves the room (Harley, 2016).

Contradicting Theory

People may feel that their spouse is not meeting emotional needs. But, marriage

counselors and psychology experts generally agree that only you can satisfy those needs. You

should not consider yourself an empty emotional vessel to be filled by

your spouse. You need to take responsibility for your own fulfillment, and the best way to do

that is to consider and satisfy your spouse's needs first (Stritof, 2018). You're not responsible for

meeting *all* of your partner's needs, but you certainly should put those needs ahead of your own.

Some of these needs include affection, conversation, honesty and openness, financial support and

family commitment. Once you are in the mindset of being a loving and giving spouse, you can

then start to advocate for your own needs—but you have to be careful about how you go about it.

When you want your spouse to perform some kind of action to magically meet your needs, you

are really asking him or her to change (Stritof, 2018). Asking for what you need directly will

greatly improve your chances of getting it (Stritof, 2018).

Understand that you are in a relationship to bond with your spouse, to share events—big

or small—and to build a life together. "When we have an expectation that a husband or wife

fulfill us, we set ourselves up for disappointment, because no human being can satisfy another human being," says Mark Altrogge, a pastor at an Indiana church, and creator of the relationship website the Blazing Center (Stritof, 2018, p. 1). To hope that another human can meet our needs is asking too much of anyone. "Don't look at where your spouse needs to change," Altrogge says, "Look to where you need to change. Don't have expectations of your spouse. If you have expectations, place them on yourself" (Stritof, 2018, p. 1).

Looking at a review of limited and possibly contradictory research concerning older married couples, observations that have been made are the following:

1. Many older people feel that their married life is as satisfactory as, if not more than, in previous years, and

2. Other studies have stated that marital satisfaction declines during the later years (Stinnett, Collins, & Montgomery, 1970).

Challenges to Meeting Needs

Romantic love lasts only a year. Italian researchers have found that the biochemical in the brain which makes falling in love feeling disappear in about a year (Emanuele et al., 2006). They say this explains why the happy, wonderful and confident emotions we experience at the start of a relationship cannot sustain indefinitely. Scientists from the University of Pavia revealed that levels of a chemical called Nerve Growth Factor (NGF) greatly surge when a person first falls in love. NGF levels come from the rush of adrenalin and love of life that occur when new love flourishes. The chemical disappears over a year or so after people become more confident in a relationship.

Research leader Dr. Enzo Emanuele stated: "We have demonstrated for the first time that…levels of NGF are raised among [people] in love, signifying an momentous role for this

particle in the social chemistry in people" (Emanuele et al., 2006, p. 1). His team analyzed 58 participants who had recently fallen in love. The scientists compared NGF levels in this group with those in people who were single or in stable relationships. They found increased levels of NGF in the new romantics. They also said NGF caused sweaty palms and anxieties in stomachs, and perhaps made young men buy flowers and create candlelit dinners (Emanuele et al., 2006).

Conflicts arise in the best of relationships, that's the norm. Some couples are better at repairing their conflicts than others and those repair skills are often the difference between success and failure. Far too many couples think that the presence of conflict means the relationship might be flawed and maybe should be given up on. But research shows that conflict management can be learned and improved. Having arguments doesn't have to mean the relationship will fail (Cole, 2016).

Marital conflict is created one of two ways: 1. Couples fail to make each other happy, or 2. couples make each other unhappy. In the first case, couples are frustrated because their needs are not being met. In the second case, they are deliberately hurting each other. The first is a failure to care, and the second is a failure to protect (Harley, 2016).

 Ignorance contributes to failure to care because men and women have great difficulty understanding and appreciating the value of each other's needs. Men tend to try to meet the needs of men and women do the same. The problem is that the needs of men and women are often very different, and we waste effort trying to meet the wrong needs (Harley, 2016).

Aside from the risk of an affair, important emotional needs should be met for the sake of care itself. Marriage is a very special relationship. Promises are made to allow a spouse the exclusive right to meet some of these important needs. When they are unmet, that is unfair to the spouse who must go through life without ethical alternatives (Harley, 2016).

The second cause of marital conflict, failure to protect, is the subject of a companion book *Love Busters: Overcoming the Habits That Destroy Romantic Love*. The author shares that couples that find their needs unmet often become thoughtless and inconsiderate. When that happens, marriages slide into ugly and destructive scenes. The failure to meet these needs is often unintentional, but reaction to unmet needs develops into intentional harm. That often leads to unbearable pain and, ultimately, divorce. (Harley, 2016).

Dr. John Gottman from the University of Washington has been studying relationships for the last 40 years (Brittle, 2014). He found that happy couples use five times more positive behaviors in their arguments than negative behaviors. One way they do this is by using humor to break the tension in an argument. During the course of his research, Dr. Gottman was able to divide couples into two categories: masters and disasters. The disaster couples were prone to systems of dividing, what he specifically calls the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: contempt, criticism, defensiveness and stonewalling (Brittle, 2014). The masters had effective strategies for dismantling those systems. Dr. Gottman calls these strategies repair attempts which are secret weapons for emotionally intelligent couples. Repair attempts can be any statement or action that prevents negativity from escalating. Master couples repair problems early and often use a variety of strategies.

Repairs can be cognitive strategies like compromise, taking a break, or asking for clarity, or emotional repairs like expressing affection, taking responsibility or humor. An artfully deployed inside joke can shift the focus away from your fixed position and toward your shared moment. It's an emotional repair without an emotional conversation (Brittle, 2014). This is kind of *repair* effort will mend conflicts. We find that happy couples also use expressions of affection

for their partner and acknowledge their partner's point of view in order to keep quarrels from getting too heated (Gottman & Carrere, 2016).

When needs are not met. How can you tell when your emotional needs are not being met? There are signs, which will alert you that something is missing. These signs can help you evaluate your situation and correct the problem. The following items indicate when an individual's emotional needs are not being met:

1.   You're daydreaming too much

2.   There is little affection

3.   Communication has ceased

4.   You are resentful most of the time

5.   You're avoiding people

6.   You're confiding too much in others (Sherrie, 2018, p. 1).

To have your emotional needs met, you must have a partner that is willing to work through issues with you. The first thing you need to remember when addressing concerns about emotional needs, is to speak calmly. It is important to void words that attack or belittle someone who fails to provide emotional support (Sherrie, 2018).

In online dating, the number one quality that people are looking for is a good sense of humor. It ranks higher than security, education, and even the appearance. This is consistent with research studies that suggest a good sense of humor is one of the most sought-out characteristics in romantic relationships (Bressler, Martin, & Balshine, 2006; Cann, Calhoun, & Banks, 1997; Hall, 2013). Hall (2013) did a study with 103 couples in long-term romantic relationships to explore the associations between general humor styles, relationship-specific humor functions, and relationship satisfaction. In this study, four "Actor-Partner Interdependence Models tested

whether five communicative functions of humor (i.e., enjoyment, affection, let go of conflict, coping, apologize) mediated the associations between humor styles (i.e., affiliative, self-enhancing, self-defeating, aggressive) and relationship satisfaction" (Hall, 2013, p. 272). It was found that "the enjoyment function of humor consistently mediated the relationship between positive humor styles and satisfaction" (Hall, 2013, p. 272). Two other functions of humor (i.e., affection, let go) were found to mediate the relationship between positive styles and satisfaction (Hall, 2013).

If you don't know how to ask for what you need, you are less likely to have your needs met. Learning to communicate needs is often one of the most challenging aspects of relationships because people are not always aware of what there needs are. Personal needs have to be identified and brought to a conscious level, then communicated. It must also become a priority to meet the needs of your partner. The motivation for meeting needs must also be identified.

Lewandowski and Ackerman (2006) investigated whether an individual's motivations that are related to need fulfillment and self-expansion within a romantic relationship can predict self-reported susceptibility to infidelity. A sample of 109 college students (50 men, 59 women) who were in dating relationships completed questionnaires that assessed 5 types of variables of need fulfillment (i.e., intimacy, companionship, sex, security, and emotional involvement), 3 types of self-expansion variables (i.e., self-expansion, inclusion of the other in the self, and potential for self-expansion), and susceptibility to infidelity (Lewandowski & Ackerman, 2006). As the present authors predicted, both sets of predictors (need fulfillment and self-expansion) significantly contributed to the variance in susceptibility to infidelity (Lewandowski & Ackerman, 2006). The present findings indicated the possibility that, when a relationship is not

able to fulfill needs or provide ample self-expansion for an individual, his or her susceptibility to infidelity increases (Lewandowski & Ackerman, 2006).

Luckily, it is never too late to enhance your communication skills and increase your chances of being *both heard and understood* (Degges-White, 2016; Mark & Jozkowski, 2013). Effective communication requires the mastery of active listening; this skill is a standard part of the curriculum in most every helping profession preparation program, but it also is useful for anyone trying to improve their effectiveness in negotiations and relations (Degges-White, 2016; Mark & Jozkowski, 2013).

According to researcher, Suzanne Degges-White Ph.D. (2016), there are 10 steps for discussing the trivial to the traumatic with your partner without having the conversation turn negative or hostile:

- Get comfortable – and if it's a difficult topic you plan to discuss, some place relatively *neutral* works best. Don't talk about money in bed, for instance.

- Give your partner your full attention. Turn off or put down any distracting technology. Lean in towards your partner a little bit. Let your body language send a message of connection – especially if you are concerned that topic may create distance, at first.

- Look at your partner and make eye contact. Don't try and "stare down" your partner, but don't send a message that you're afraid to face your partner, either. If your eyes wander, bring them back to your partner's face.

- Open up with an 'I statement' that takes the pressure off your partner. This doesn't mean something like 'I need you to change,' either! Own your own

feelings and use language that indicates your awareness that each of us is responsible for our own thoughts and behavior.

- Invite your partner to share her perceptions that the use an open question (one that doesn't invite a one or two word answer).

- Don't interrupt! Stay focused, attentive, and connected. Even if you particularly like or simply don't agree with what is being said. Hang in there and keep your focus on the overarching goal of honest communication – a better relationship.

- Reflect back to your partner what you think your partner is saying – check in with your partner to make sure you are hearing the overall message, not just the words. Check back in with your partner, 'What I hear you saying is…' or 'If I understand you correctly, than I think you feel…' This lets your partner know that you really care about the message being conveyed and that you are invested in making sure you heard it accurately. It also helps you empathize with your partner's perspective -- it's amazing how different a relationship can look to two different people!

- Use collaborative language and recognize that when the two of you are in a room, there's a third entity present – the relationship. Couples counselors are taught that working with a couple means there are '3 clients in the room, each member of the couple and the relationship itself.' What you or your partner thinks *best* for yourselves or one another may not reflect what is *best* for the relationship.

- If there's a problem that you are trying to solve, communicate your ideas for solutions with tentativeness. Maybe something like, 'Well, perhaps we could try…' Or 'What if I did . . . and you did . . .' Or, maybe even better yet, 'I'm stuck. What do you think we need to do next?'

- Keep the communication flowing, be willing to listen, make sure you are really hearing the message your partner is sending, and don't be afraid to say you don't know (Degges-White, 2016, pp. 2-3; Mark & Jozkowski, 2013, pp. 410-27).

According to Robins (2018), there is one surefire way to know if your partner is meeting your needs in your relationship. Listen to them, truly listen: reflect on what your partner says, and if you're not sure what he or she means, then ask by restating their point and asking if you understand correctly. Also, to truly understand what your partner is telling you, be present, be here now: Put time aside and dedicate yourself 100% to communicating with your partner. They should know, truly feel, that they have your full attention and that they are your number one priority (Robbins, 2018). Finally, be honest and open — say what you mean, and make your feelings and your needs clear. Retreating from conflict seems deceptively safe and comfortable, but it's no substitute for trust in a relationship. Walking away from an argument is a temporary way to deal with an ongoing communication issue. When partners disagree, they must be able to trust they will be heard and respected (Robbins, 2018).

Tracking Success in Meeting Needs

For each of the five needs in Maslow's motivational hierarchy (physiological, safety-security, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization), operational definitions were developed from Maslow's theory of motivation (Taormina & Gao, 2013).

New measures were created based on the operational definitions (1) to assess the

satisfaction of each need, (2) to assess their expected correlations (a) with each of

the other needs and (b) with four social and personality measures (i.e., family

support, traditional values, anxiety/worry, and life satisfaction), and (3) to test the

ability of the satisfaction level of each need to statistically predict the satisfaction

level of the next higher-level need (Taormina & Gao, 2013, p. 155).

The more each lower-level need was satisfied, the more the next higher-level need

was satisfied. Additionally, as predicted, family support, traditional values, and

life satisfaction had significant positive correlations with the satisfaction of all

five needs, and the anxiety/worry facet of neuroticism had significant negative

correlations with the satisfaction of all the needs. Multiple regression analyses

revealed that the satisfaction of each higher-level need was statistically predicted

by the satisfaction of the need immediately below it in the hierarchy, as expected

from Maslow's theory (Taormina & Gao, 2013, p. 155).

Satisfaction, in positive psychology literature, tends to imply that things are okay.

Thriving and growing, what's known as *eudaimonia*, implies that you are constantly moving

upward in your levels of expressiveness and fulfillment. Both stem from the related concept of

happiness, which implies feeling good (Fowers et al., 2016; Krass Whitbourne, 2016).

Taking these concepts from the individual to the relationship, University of Miami

researcher Blaine Fowers and colleagues (2016) developed the Relationship Flourishing Scale

(RFS) to take the temperature of relationships in a new and perhaps more dynamic way than the

measures currently available (Whitbourne, 2016). One key point that Fowers et al. (2016) make

to justify the use of their scale is that the majority of relationship quality gauges available now don't do a very good job of capturing the richness present in an enduring partnership. They note:

> As couples live together over many years, the partners can mature together and shape one another's identity and habits… creating a shared history and shared goals that often transcend individual satisfaction (Fowers et al., 2016, p. 997). A measure of relationship flourishing would have greater richness and depth, providing a more realistic yardstick by which to gauge growth in relationships—both of the individuals and of their shared identity as a couple. As the authors state, it has the potential to contribute to 'positive relationship science' (Fowers et al., 2016, p. 1006).

Capturing relationship flourishing, the researchers argue, would have to take into account the following four components:

- Meaning and purpose.

- Personal growth.

- Goal sharing.

- Relational giving (prioritizing the partner more than oneself) .

Fowers and his colleagues thought that flourishing in relationships should not only reflect these four components, but also feed further into each individual's ability to flourish (Fowers et al., 2016; Whitbourne, 2016).

The items on the RFS were arrived at through a narrowing-down of a longer scale given to a sample of 408 married individuals who had been through nationwide sampling. The participants averaged 43 years of age and married about 15 years (Fowers et al., 2016; Whitbourne, 2016). To validate the scale, the research team administered a set of standard

relationship satisfaction questionnaires, including the readiness that the participants felt to initiate divorce. They also included some unconventional measures, including the extent to which participants felt they were "part of a couple," how central the relationship was to them, and a Venn diagram measure of the inclusion of the other in the self (Fowers et al., 2016; Whitbourne, 2016).

With this in mind, below are the 12 items that were a part of the RFS using a scale of 1 to 5 ("strongly agree" or "always" is a *5*):

- I have more success in my important goals because of my partner's help.
- We look for activities that help us to grow as a couple.
- My partner has helped me to grow in ways that I could not have done on my own.
- It is worth it to share my most personal thoughts with my partner.
- When making important decisions, I think about whether it will be good for our relationship.
- It is natural and easy for me to do things that keep our relationship strong.
- Talking with my partner helps me to see things in new ways.
- I make it a point to celebrate my partner's successes.
- I really work to improve our relationship.
- My partner shows interest in things that are important to me.
- We do things that are deeply meaningful to us as a couple.
- I make time when my partner needs to talk.

The items break down into the four categories of relationship flourishing:

- Goal sharing

- Personal growth

- Meaning

- Relational giving

The Relationship Flourishing Scale provided additional explanatory value beyond a couple satisfaction measure (Fowers et al., 2016; Whitbourne, 2016). Another test that was included in this scale was assessing the ratio of positive to negative experiences in a relationship, in other words, happiness. By answering questions from the RFS, couples can tell from their own scores where their relationship strengths and weaknesses can be found.

Sense of Humor

Research from the University of Kansas as studied by psychologist Jeffrey Hall has found that couples who share the same sense of humor have a stronger connection which can be a key to relationship success (Hall, 2015). Jeffrey Hall analyzed the findings of 39 studies looking at 15,000 participants to find out more about the importance of humor in a relationship (Hall, 2015). From his studies, Jeffrey Hall concluded that finding a partner with a sense of humor is not as important as finding a partner who shares the same sense of humor as you (Hall, 2015).

People say that a sense of humor is an important quality to find in a mate, but that's a broad concept. Relationship satisfaction does not strongly relate to someone thinking you are funny or you can make a joke out of anything. What is strongly related to relationship satisfaction is the humor that couples create together (Hall, 2015).

A good sense of humor is one of the most sought-out characteristics in a romantic partner (Bressler, Martin, & Balshine, 2006; Cann et al., 1997). Additionally, individuals in romantic relationships report that humor is of vital importance. Ziv (1988) found that 92% of husbands and wives who were studied claimed that humor made significant contributions to married life.

Lauer, Lauer, and Kerr (1990) suggested that almost 75% of couples laugh together at least once a day. Several early studies reported that partners' use of humor was strongly correlated with relational quality and satisfaction (Lauer et al., 1990; Ziv, 1988; Ziv & Gadish, 1989). Yet, as research on the role of humor in romantic relationships has become more nuanced and sophisticated, humor researchers have found it difficult to demonstrate these beneficial effects. Barelds and Barelds-Dijkstra (2010) reported that ''humor plays a limited role in intimate, long-term relationships'' (p. 458), and Hall and Sereno (2010) suggested that negative humor fails to explain variance in relational satisfaction.

To account for the varying effects of humor in long-term relationships, contemporary researchers have begun to investigate which particular styles of humor are most predictive of relationship satisfaction. Several researchers have used the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ), developed by Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, and Weir (2003), to explore the differential impact of humor style on relational outcomes. For example, Campbell, Martin, and Ward (2008) compared the influence of affiliative and aggressive humor on couples' conflict, and found that only affiliative humor use was related to positive relational outcomes. Cann, Zapata, and Davis (2011) reported that taken together the four humor styles only weakly predicted relational satisfaction and only self-enhancing humor was positively associated with satisfaction. Other humor researchers have focused on the functions, purposes, and goals of humor in relationships (Bippus, 2000; De Koning & Weiss, 2002). Research has suggested that the positive effects of humor may be dependent on how humor is used in a relationship. For example, past researchers have demonstrated that humor contributes to relational maintenance (Bippus, 2000; Haas & Stafford, 2005), has the potential to mitigate conflict (Bippus, 2000), and can generate playful and positive emotions (Aune & Wong, 2002). However, this research has

also been inconclusive. Barelds and Barelds-Dijkstra (2010) explored various functions of humor and concluded that humor played an inconsistent and limited role in predicting relational satisfaction. Rather, Barelds, and Barelds-Dijkstra (2010) recommended that researchers should attend to both the style of humor and its functional use to better account for humor's value in romantic relationships. The present manuscript combines four general styles of humor with five positive relationship-specific functions of humor. This investigation will shed light on which styles of humor are most beneficial to relationships, and it will determine whether there are particular communicative functions of humor that are more valuable than others in influencing relationship satisfaction.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the relationship between the humor styles (Martin et al., 2003), the functions of humor in romantic relationships (Bippus, 2000; De Koning & Weiss, 2002), the sex of the participants, and relationship satisfaction. Specifically, it was predicted that the relationship-specific functions of humor will mediate the associations between partners' style of humor and their relationship satisfaction, and that these associations may be moderated by partner sex.

This article explores the impact of the use of negative humor on relational satisfaction and the importance of humor in long-term relationships from a co-orientation perspective (Hall & Sereno, 2010). Dyadic data from 123 couples were gathered using a survey measuring positive and negative humor use (Hall & Sereno, 2010). These data were analyzed using structural equations modeling and the Actor-Partner Independence Model (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). Negative humor weakly predicted relational outcomes, but was valuable when partners saw themselves as possessing a shared sense of humor. Men acknowledge that their own public negative humor use negatively impacts the importance of humor in their relationship. Perceived

similarity in negative humor use positively predicts relational satisfaction for both partners, and positively predicts the importance of humor for men, regardless of how much positive humor the couple uses. Accurately knowing a partner's negative humor use, or having greater understanding, negatively predicted relational outcomes (Hall & Sereno, 2010).

A study was done on humor styles and relationship satisfaction in dating couples: Perceived versus self-reported humor styles as predictors of satisfaction (Cann et al., 2011). Humor has been identified as a potentially important variable in facilitating relationship satisfaction in romantic couples (Cann et al., 2011). Using a measure of stable differences in how humor is expressed by individuals, the current research looks at the possibility that dating couples have similar humor styles, and at whether self-reported or perceived humor styles best predict relationship satisfaction. Individuals in a sample of 82 couples independently completed the measures of own and perceived partner's humor styles and relationship satisfaction on multiple indicators of satisfaction (Cann et al., 2011). The results indicate little similarity within couples on humor styles. The best predictors of satisfaction were perceptions of a partner's humor style, with humor styles that were other-directed explaining the most variability in satisfaction. The results demonstrate the usefulness of treating humor uses as a multidimensional variable to better understand the roles humor might play across circumstances and relationships (Cann et al., 2011).

A study on humor in conflict discussions was done to comparing partners' perceptions. This study assessed romantic partners' perceptions of their own and each others' humor usage during a conflict discussion. Forty-eight married and dating couples were recorded discussing conflict topics that both partners cited as sources of disagreement in their relationships (Bippus, Young, & Dunbar, 2011). Both partners then viewed the videotaped interaction and reported on

the humor used by each of them in the interaction. Humor was identified by at least one participant in all couples, with a total of 412 instances of verbal humor identified by participants across 336 minutes of re-coded interaction (Bippus et al., 2011). Partners identified the same instances as humor attempts about 34% of the time (Bippus et al., 2011). A mix of actor and partner variables predicted participants' relationship satisfaction and their perceptions of conflict escalation and progress. The implications of these findings for advancing the understanding of humor in conflict, as well as the utility of this methodology for further study of humor in dyads, are discussed (Bippus et al., 2011).

A study was done on laughing and liking which explored the interpersonal effects of humor use in initial social interactions (Treger, Sprecher, & Erber, 2013). Humor is a common interpersonal phenomenon that may positively influence the trajectories of social interactions. In two social interaction experiments, we examined the association between humor and liking (Treger et al., 2013). The first study was a secondary analysis of data from a prior experiment (originally conducted for another purpose) in which unacquainted participants engaged in a self-disclosure task and rated each other on various dimensions, including humor. In Experiment 2, unacquainted mixed-sex dyads participated in a series of either humorous or similar but non-humorous tasks. In both studies, humor was positively associated with liking and closeness; perceived reciprocal liking and enjoyment of the interaction mediated the association between humor and liking. Likewise, we found a positive association between liking and humor. Men and women did not differ in self-reported humor use. The findings suggest that humor is a mechanism used to establish connections with others across all relationships and for both sexes (Treger et al., 2013).

Glenn and Weaver (1981) used data from 6 US national surveys to compare the estimated contributions to global happiness of marital happiness and satisfaction with each of 7 aspects of life, ranging from work to friendships. Separate estimates are provided for White males, White females, Black males, and Black females (Glenn & Weaver, 1981). Except for Black males, the estimated contribution of marital happiness was far greater than the estimated contribution of any of the kinds of satisfaction, including satisfaction with work. These findings, considered in conjunction with other evidence, indicate that Americans depend heavily on their marriages for their psychological well-being (Glenn & Weaver, 1981).

Wellenzohn, Proyer, and Ruch (2018) studied benefits from humor-based positive psychology interventions and the moderating effects of personality traits and sense of humor. The evidence for the effectiveness of humor-based positive psychology interventions (PPIs; i.e., interventions aimed at enhancing happiness and lowering depressive symptoms) is steadily increasing (Wellenzohn et al., 2018). However, little is known about who benefits most from them. We aim at narrowing this gap by examining whether personality traits and sense of humor moderate the long-term effects of humor-based interventions on happiness and depressive symptoms (Wellenzohn et al., 2018). We conducted two placebo-controlled online-intervention studies testing for moderation effects. In Study 1 ($N = 104$) we tested for moderation effects of basic personality traits (i.e., psychoticism, extraversion, and neuroticism) in the three funny things intervention, a humor-based PPI. In Study 2 ($N = 632$) we tested for moderation effects of the sense of humor in five different humor-based interventions (Wellenzohn et al., 2018). Happiness and depressive symptoms were assessed before and after the intervention, as well as after 1, 3, and 6 months. In Study 2, we assessed sense of humor before and 1 month after the intervention to investigate if changes in sense of humor go along with changes in happiness and

depressive symptoms (Wellenzohn et al., 2018). We found moderating effects only for extraversion. Extraverts benefited more from the three funny things intervention than introverts (Wellenzohn et al., 2018). For neuroticism and psychoticism no moderation effects were found. For sense of humor, no moderating effects were found for the effectiveness of the five humor-based interventions tested in Study 2 (Wellenzohn et al., 2018). However, changes in sense of humor from pretest to the 1-month follow-up predicted changes in happiness and depressive symptoms. Taking a closer look, the playful attitude- and sense of humor-subscales predicted changes in happiness and depression for up to 6 months. Overall, moderating effects for personality (i.e., extraversion) were found, but none for sense of humor at baseline. However, increases in sense of humor during and after the intervention were associated with the interventions' effectiveness. Thus, we found humor-based interventions to be equally suited for humorous and non-humorous people, but increases in the sense of humor during the intervention phase could serve as an indicator whether it is worth continuing the intervention in the long-term (Wellenzohn et al., 2018).

Motivation in humor. Levine (2017) says that it is easy to understand why there is so much disagreement about humor. No pattern of human behavior is so full of paradoxes. A joke is "one man's meat but another man's poison," or, as William Hazlitt put it, "sport to one but death to another" (Levine, 2017, p. 13). If you laugh without restraint, you are thought to be either mad or mentally healthy. A joke is trivial and nonsensical, yet it may express a profound truth. Understanding a joke is an intellectual achievement, yet reflective thought destroys the humor. We laugh for many reasons, some contradictory; we may laugh in sympathy or in scorn, from anxiety or relief, from anger or affection, from joy or frustration. Viewed one way, humor is regarded as a trifling, destructive, and degrading force to morality, religion, and art. Seen

differently, it is a liberating, socially constructive, and even ennobling art. The difficulty was well expressed by W. C. Fields: "The funniest thing about comedy is that you never know why people laugh. I know what makes them laugh, but trying to get your hands on the why of it is like trying to pick an eel out of a tub of water" (Levine, 2017, p. 1).

How humor functions in relationships. La France and Hall (2012) pointed out, whether or not this perspective was acknowledged explicitly, humor researchers have ''typically approach[ed] the use of humor from a functional perspective'' (p. 121). On a broad level, the functions of humor include the various roles it may play and=or the various purposes it may serve. Lynch (2002) suggested that there are general functions which humor serves in society (e.g., identification, differentiation, resistance), and humor functions can be contextual, such as in long-term relationships (Bippus, 2000; Raneseski, 1998; Ziv, 1988). Lynch (2002) argued that in contrast to psychological or sociological perspectives that privilege what humor does for the individual or for a society, communication researchers should explore how humor serves social functions between individuals or among groups, such as to tease, persuade, or attract others.

The function of humor in the context of an ongoing romantic relationship can be defined as the intended use of a humorous message or behavior to achieve a communicative goal specific to the romantic relationship. In defining the function of humor in this way, the influence of humor in a romantic relationship depends on its ability to help relational partners communicate a message or express an attitude or emotion. When using the functional perspective on humor, it is important both to explore the antecedents, e.g., humor style, of the functional use of humor and its consequences, e.g., relationship satisfaction (La France & Hall, 2012). The present manuscript will argue that partners' style of humor may facilitate relationship-specific humor functions, and that these functions affect partners' relationship satisfaction. Not all of these functions of humor

are likely to benefit relationships equally. There are several negative functions of humor in romantic relationships: to express censored ideas (Bippus, 2000), to distance oneself from one's partner (Raneseski, 1998), and to express aggression (Ziv, 1988). These functions of humor may help communicate a message, but none of these functions are likely to contribute positively to the relationship (Raneseski, 1998). While acknowledging the negative functions of humor, the present investigation will focus on the functions of humor expected to positively influence relationship satisfaction. To do so, I identified and operationalized five positive humorous functions that are supported by past research and relevant to romantic relationships: to share enjoyment, to express affection, to cope with stress, to let go of conflict, and to apologize. Due to humor's ability to make fun for its own sake (Aune & Wong, 2002; Martin, Kuiper, Olinger, & Dance, 1993), one commonly identified function of humor in romantic relationships is to share positivity, happiness, and levity with a partner. Bippus (2000) suggested that having fun, being funny, and being open to joking around were key functions of humor in romantic relationships. Similarly, De Koning and Weiss (2002) and Ziv (1988) identified levity and play as positive functions of humor, and Aune and Wong (2002) demonstrated that humor cultivates a playful and positive social environment in relationships. The second function of humor is the expression of affection. La France and Hall (2012) explored the value of complementary and affectionate humor in their review of the use of idiomatic humorous communication. Raneseski (1998) and Bippus (2000) demonstrated that humor is often used for romantic bonding through the use of pet names, affectionate communication, and other cute behaviors. When humor is used to express affection, it is likely to positively contribute to a relationship.

The next two communicative functions of humor relate to humor's role in coping and managing conflict. The use of humor to release stress and tension has long been identified as one

of the key functions of humor in general (Martin & Lefcourt, 1984; Thorson & Powell, 1993).

Possessing a sense of humor has been shown to buffer symptoms due to stress (Abel, 1998), and

having a sense of humor is associated with greater immunity from infection (Martin, 2002).

Within romantic relationships, humor is commonly used to cope with stressful situations and

reframe life's challenges (Graham, Papa, & Brooks, 1992; Martin, 2002). In a similar vein, one

third of romantic couples in Alberts's (1990) sample reported using humor to manage

interpersonal conflict. During a conflict conversation between romantic couples, individuals who

used more affiliative and less aggressive humor were more satisfied with their relationship and

reported resolving more conflicts (Campbell et al., 2008). In sum, humor can be productively

deployed to cope with challenges and manage conflict in romantic relationships.

The final positive communicative function of humor is to apologize. Humor can convey a

message of apology or an admission of wrongdoing (Graham et al., 1992). Hay (2000) suggested

that humor is often used defensively or to admit to mistakes before others point them out (i.e., to

beat someone to the punch). When humor is used to apologize, messages that are otherwise

difficult to express can be more easily conveyed (Ziv, 1988).

Humor is related to experiencing greater levels of intimacy in relationships and is

affirming of self and others (Martin et al., 2003). By comparison, a person with a humorous

outlook on life has a self-enhancing style of humor. This person is amused by incongruities of

life and is likely to use humor to cope and to take an affirming perspective (Martin et al., 2003).

Compared to the affiliative humor style, the self-enhancing style is more intrapersonal than

interpersonal.

Aggressive humor is defined as including sarcasm, teasing, ridicule, or derisive humor.

Individuals employing self-defeating or self-deprecating humor say funny things at their own

expense. By calling attention to personal flaws or showing oneself to be unable to behave appropriately, the self-deprecator attempts to achieve solidarity and closeness with others through humor (Sharkey, Park, & Kim, 2004).

Humor researchers have long been interested in the role of humor in romantic relationships, particularly the association between humor and romantic relationship satisfaction (Ziv, 1988). Although some researchers have suggested that humor use is strongly related to relationship satisfaction (Lauer et al., 1990; Ziv, 1988), more recent researchers have found it difficult to replicate those findings (Barelds & Barelds-Dijkstra, 2010; Cann et al., 2011). Barelds and Barelds-Dijkstra (2010) suggested that the functional use of humor may explain variance in relationship satisfaction that cannot be explained by a general style of humor alone. That is, one explanation for the lack of association between humor style and relationship satisfaction is that humor does not directly contribute to positive relationship outcomes. Rather, humor contributes indirectly through facilitating communicative acts, such as expressing joy, mitigating conflict, or coping with stress. The present investigation was premised on the argument that the association between partners' style of humor and their relationship satisfaction is dependent upon how humor is used in the relationship. It is not just having a sense of humor that influences relationship satisfaction; it is how that sense of humor is used.

Due to affiliative humor's role in joke telling and interpersonal intimacy (Martin et al., 2003), partners with more affiliative styles of humor are more likely to make jokes for the sake of enjoyment and being affectionate with their partner. Furthermore, Campbell et al. (2008) demonstrated that affiliative humor use was related to greater conflict resolution in dating couples. To summarize: Affiliative humor will be positively related to using humor a) to share enjoyment, b) to express affection, and c) to reduce conflict.

The importance of laughter. Of all the elements that contribute to the warm atmosphere of a good relationship, there is one that seldom gets translated into advice or even therapy, yet is something that everyone desires and most people would like more of, which is laughter (Marano, 2016). Laughter is, first and foremost, a social signal--it disappears when there is no audience, which may be as small as one other person--and it binds people together. It synchronizes the brains of speaker and listener so that they are emotionally attuned (Marano, 2016; Provine, 2016). Homegrown laughter may be what ailing couples need most (Marano, 2016).

Kurtz and Algoe (2015) introduce the concept of putting laughter in context with shared laughter as behavioral indicator of relationship well-being. Laughter is a pervasive human behavior that most frequently happens in a social context (Kurtz & Algoe, 2015). However, data linking the behavior of laughter with psychological or social outcomes are exceptionally rare. Here, the authors draw attention to *shared laughter* as a useful objective marker of relationship well-being. Spontaneously generated laughs of 71 heterosexual romantic couples were coded from a video-recorded conversation about how the couple first met. Multilevel models revealed that while controlling for all other laughter present, the proportion of the conversation spent laughing simultaneously with the romantic partner was uniquely positively associated with global evaluations of relationship quality, closeness, and social support. Results are discussed with respect to methodological considerations and theoretical implications for relationships and behavioral research more broadly (Kurtz & Algoe, 2015).

Despite independent evidence that reminiscing about positive events has positive emotional benefits, and that laughter plays a role in seemingly successful relationships, there is a lack of empirical research examining how reminiscing about laughter might influence relationship well-being (Bazzini, Stack, Martincin, & Davis, 2007). Specifically, the current

study assessed whether reminiscing about shared laughter would increase relationship satisfaction among romantic couples. Fifty-two couples were randomly assigned to one of four reminiscing conditions and completed pre- and post-manipulation assessments of relationship satisfaction (Bazzini et al., 2007). As predicted, couples who reminisced about events involving shared laugher reported higher relationship satisfaction at the post-manipulation satisfaction assessment as compared to couples in the three control conditions. The effect was not attributed to positive mood induction, as mood scores across groups were similar. Results show preliminary support for the notion that reminiscing about laughter may have a more potent influence on relationship well being than reminiscing about other positive events (Bazzini et al., 2007).

Laughter is an approach to vocal evolution: The bipedal theory (Provine, 2017). Laughter is a simple, stereotyped, innate, human play vocalization that is ideal for the study of vocal evolution. The basic approach of describing the act of laughter and when we do it has revealed a variety of phenomena of social, linguistic, and neurological significance. Findings include the acoustic structure of laughter, the minimal voluntary control of laughter, the *punctuation effect* (which describes the placement of laughter in conversation and indicates the dominance of speech over laughter), and the role of laughter in human matching and mating.

Laughter is a fundamental part of everyday life. Laughter is a "speaking in tongues" in which we're moved not by religious fervor but by an unconscious response to social and linguistic cues (Provine, 2016). Laughter is primarily a social vocalization that binds people together. It is a hidden language that we all speak. It is not a learned group reaction but an instinctive behavior programmed by our genes. Laughter bonds us through humor and play (Provine, 2016). Laughter is a signal we send to others (Provine, 2016).

Laughter is an inherently social phenomenon: it happens most frequently in the presence of other people (Provine & Fischer, 1989), one person's laugh often elicits laughter in another (Grammer & Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1990), and this is most likely to occur if the witness to the laughter is a friend rather than a stranger (Smoski & Bachorowski, 2003). These data present the intriguing possibility that laughter plays an important role in social life. There is growing consensus that close relationships can not only help people survive, but also to thrive, and increasing attention has been placed on the everyday emotion-fueled interpersonal processes that may underlie these effects (Algoe, Fredrickson, & Gable, 2013; social support, Collins & Feeney, 2000; capitalization, Gable, Gosnell, Maisel, & Strachman, 2012). Moments of shared laughter may be another such feature of high quality relationships that makes people feel they have the resources necessary to explore and grow, both together and individually (Aron et al., 2000).

Linguist Deborah Tannen described gender differences in speech in her best-selling book, *You Just Don't Understand* (1993). The gender differences in laughter may be even greater. In our 1,200 case studies, my fellow researchers and I found that while both sexes laugh a lot, females laugh more (Provine, 2016). In cross-gender conversations, females laughed 126% more than their male counterparts, meaning that women tend to do the most laughing while males tend to do the most laugh-getting (Provine, 2016). Men seem to be the main instigators of humor across cultures. The laughter of the female, not the male, is the critical index of a healthy relationship (Provine, 2016).

Couples who laugh together have a stronger bond, and are able to overcome the stresses and conflicts in their relationship (Schoenwald, 2015). Shared laughter with your significant other can improve your relationship in the most enjoyable way possible (Schoenwald, 2015).

Laughter plays an extremely important role in our relationships from the initial attraction to long-term commitments (Schoenwald, 2015). Humor is the number one quality people look for in choosing a partner, and can be an effective way to attract another person (Schoenwald, 2015). Laughing, giggling and guffawing with your partner increases happiness —not just in your own life, but also in the life you share together. Laughter costs nothing, and yet the benefits are massive. Just hearing a person laugh can put you in a good mood. Injecting a little humor into your relationship will help it to thrive, and survive (Schoenwald, 2015). A well-timed joke can lighten a tense situation, and it can help you resolve arguments (Schoenwald, 2015). Humor can help put things in perspective and assist you in seeing things from your partner's point of view. When you are experiencing the benefits of humor, you loosen up, and you're able to solve a problem more creatively (Schoenwald, 2015). Laughing not only makes us better problem-solvers when there's tension, but it can help us bond us closer together and increase attraction to our partners, which becomes necessary when your relationship feels stale (Schoenwald, 2015). When you have a joke that only your significant other and you understand, it can often be a shortcut to closeness (Schoenwald, 2015). As time goes on, your inside joke can be reduced to a word, a short phrase, or small gesture, the use of which will instantly give the both of you a moment of affection. When you have amusing stories or jokes that just the two of you understand, it's the same as having a secret language making it sweet and romantic for you and your significant other (Schoenwald, 2015). Everybody wants to laugh because our bodies instinctively know it's good for us and for our relationships (Schoenwald, 2015). Love can keep us together, but it's shared laughter that makes our relationships fun and lasting (Schoenwald, 2015).

Jeffrey Hall, researcher from the University of Kansas, analyzed the findings of 39 studies looking at 15,000 participants over the last 30 years to find out more about the importance of humor in a relationship (Hall, 2015a). From the studies, Hall concluded that what is really important is not finding a partner with a sense of humor, but finding a partner who shares the same sense of humor as you (Hall, 2015a). What is strongly related to relationship satisfaction is the humor that couples create together (Hall, 2015a). Hall found that *playfulness between romantic partners is a crucial component in bonding and establishing relational security* and that laughter, *particularly shared laughter, is an important indicator of romantic attraction between potential mates* (Hall, 2015a). *If you share a sense of what's funny, it affirms you and affirms your relationship through laughter*, explained Hall (2015a). Hall (2015a) did find that when a man made jokes when talking to a woman, the more the woman laughed the more likely it was that she was interested in him. According to the research laughing together is a sure sign of a spark, and could be a sign that you are on a path to lasting love (Hall, 2015a).

Shared laughter. A number of gender differences were observed with regard to frequency, contagion, and relational impact of laughing behavior. Specifically, if a man were to begin laughing, there was a greater likelihood that his laugh would spark a shared laugh from his partner than vice versa (Kurtz & Algoe, 2015). Moreover, women were more likely than men to continue laughing following a shared laugh (Kurtz & Algoe, 2015). With respect to the relational correlates of shared laughter, it appears that the signal value of shared laughter may be stronger for men than for women (Kurtz & Algoe, 2015). While shared laughter was never associated with commitment for women, the two were found to be significantly associated for men in two different analyses (Kurtz & Algoe, 2015). Likewise, while greater shared laughter consistently predicted higher reports of passion for men, the two were uncorrelated for women (Kurtz &

Algoe, 2015). Combined, these effects suggest that shared laughter may be a particularly

diagnostic relationship behavior for men (Kurtz & Algoe, 2015). While women value male

partners who can make them laugh, men are more likely to be attracted to women who appreciate

their humor use—women who will laugh at their jokes (Bressler et al., 2006; Kurtz & Algoe,

2015). Shared laughter may serve as a stronger symbol of understanding and validation for men

than for women, which can be a sign that their partner gets them. This validation may in turn

map onto the more global relationship evaluations measured such as with passion (Kurtz &

Algoe, 2015).

It may also be the case that the observed gender differences are the function of some

underlying individual or relational differences between the male and female participants, such as

their trait agreeableness or perhaps an implicit power structure. Indeed, previous theorists have

situated humor use as a behavioral marker of status and power (Gruner, 1997; Kurtz & Algoe,

2015), and there is some research, especially on the use of teasing and aggressive humor within

relationships, in support of this notion (Kehily & Nayak, 2010; Keltner, Young, Oemig, &

Monarch, 1998; Kurtz & Algoe, 2015; Tragesser & Lippman, 2005).

One part of Jeffrey Hall's study found that *playfulness between romantic partners is a*

crucial component in bonding and establishing relational security and that laughter, *particularly*

shared laughter, is an important indicator of romantic attraction between potential mates (Hall,

2015a). If you and your partner share a quirky sense of humor, but romantic comedies or

sitcoms do not interest either of you, it is not that any style or a sense of humor is any better or

worse, but what matters is that you both see quirky humor as hysterical (Hall, 2015a). If you

share a sense of what's funny, it affirms you and affirms your relationship through laughter

(Hall, 2015a). It doesn't matter whether you are a great comedian or not, but it is important to

find what is funny in the everyday and enjoying it together (Hall, 2015a). However, Jeffrey Hall cautioned against making your partner the butt of a joke in order to get laughs. If you have an aggressive sense of humor, that is a bad sign for the relationship in general, but it is worse if that style of humor is used in the relationship (Hall, 2015a). Hall's additional research has also highlighted the importance of sharing laughter together for a happier relationship.

In the 2015 paper "Sexual Selection And Humor In Courtship: A Case For Warmth And Extroversion," published in the journal Evolutionary Psychology, Jeffrey Hall sought out to look at a possible relationship between humor and intelligence. Even though one of his experiments failed to show a link between humor and intelligence, he did find that when a man made jokes when talking to a woman, and the more the woman laughed, the more likely it was that she was interested in him (Hall, 2015b). According to Hall's research, laughing together is a sure sign of a spark, and could be a sign that you are on a path to lasting love. Meeting someone who you can laugh with might mean your future relationship is going to be fun and filled with good cheer (Hall, 2015b).

Chapter 2 Summary

The numerous amounts of psychological assessments for relationships can be helpful to couples. This information is very powerful and can assist in creating and sustaining happiness in their relationships. The topic of laughter being a possible gauge of success for relationships has not been explored in many articles, especially from the point of view of a professional comedian. I was hopeful that the interviews and further research that was conducted would fill in the gaps for the field of happiness. I believed that there was a law of laughter, and I did my best to uncover it.

Chapter 3. Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

What creates a successful, romantic relationship has been a topic of discussion that philosophers, scientists, and poets have been exploring for thousands of years. One explanation could be that meeting each other's needs creates happiness in a relationship. The difficult part is clearly identifying what those needs are. When we are able to consciously identify those needs for our partner, and ourselves then it is a matter of meeting or satisfying those needs. Even though it is most pronounced in romantic relationships, this can be applied to any relationship. For example, when a person goes to see a comedy show, they think that the comedian is there to make them laugh. However, he or she needs to make them happy first. This can be done by picking the right topics that the audience can relate to, communicating the ideas behind the topics, and hoping that they will be open and receptive to what is being stated and responding with laughter. The comedian and the audience have a symbiotic relationship. The comedian must meet the audience's expectations, which will in turn satisfy their needs, and then the humor triggers their laughter. The audience is laughing because the comedian met their needs; the comedian's needs are met when the audience is laughing. Everyone's needs are being satisfied.

In relationships, most people remember laughter being an important part of the dating stage. The average person believes that laughter creates happiness. William James, the father of American psychology stated "we don't laugh because we are happy, we are happy because we laugh" (James, 1890, p. 480; Markway, 2013, p. 2). After exploring this for over half a century, the researcher respectfully disagrees and believes that laughter is an auditory manifestation of feeling happy but it gets the credit for creating happiness. The purpose of this research was to understand how to identify and satisfy your needs and the needs of your partner in order to create

more laughter within the relationship. In order to accomplish this, the researcher conducted a phenomenological study using qualitative research design by interviewing participants and decoding their answers (Creswell, 2007). An analysis of multiple concepts and theories contributed to this study of identifying the needs people have in relationships, exploring those challenges, and discovering possible solutions.

Chapter 3 explains the qualitative study design methodology, the phenomenological approach, and why it was the best approach to use for this research. The safety and privacy of the human subjects were considered in the selection of the participants and sampling of that population. Biases were addressed in regards to the validity and reliability of the study. Data collected in the interviews was coded and analyzed. And finally, the results from this research were presented. This study was meant to add to the existing literature on the topic of identifying and satisfying the emotional needs of individuals in a romantic relationship.

Re-Statement of Research Questions

The research questions for this study are as follows:

RQ1: What strategies and practices do married couples use to meet each other's needs?

RQ2: What challenges do married couples face in their effort to meet each other's needs?

RQ3: How do married couples measure and track success in meeting each other's needs?

RQ4: What recommendations would marry couples give to future married couples in meeting each other's needs?

Nature of the Study

Qualitative research adopts the idea that the study of research problems challenges the meanings individuals or groups observe to be a social or human problem (Creswell, 2007). By using a qualitative approach, inquiries, data gathering from the individuals volunteering for this

study, and data analysis was essential by establishing patterns or themes (Creswell, 2007).

According to Merriam (1998), there are certain elements such as the research focus, philosophy,

inquiry goals, design, sample, data gathering, mode of analysis, and discoveries that identify a

qualitative study instead of a quantitative study. The focus of the investigation for a qualitative

study was the quality of the nature or the crux of the problem to be studied, instead of the

quantity or number of issues to be studied as found in quantitative (Bryman, 2008; Merriam,

1998). The philosophical origins of the qualitative study explore the phenomenon of the subject

that will be researched, whereas, a quantitative study examines the logic behind the investigated

subject (Merriam, 1998).

The goal for examining the subject in a qualitative study is to understand the topic and

ascertain the essence of the issue, whereas in a quantitative study, the goal is to forecast and

regulate the testing of the subject (Creswell, 1994; Merriam, 1998). The qualitative design is

flexible with a small, intentional and purposeful sample to be studied, whereas a quantitative

design is arranged with large and arbitrary samples (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 1998). The data

gathering process for a qualitative study uses the researcher as the conduit to collect data, in

addition to the interviews, instead of measures and trials that are used in quantitative studies

(Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 1998). Ultimately, the researcher analyzed the data collected through

the use of inductive reasoning, and the findings were descriptive and comprehensive in this

qualitative study, as opposed to a quantitative study which would allow the researcher to use

statistical methods as a conduit for deductive analysis, and the findings would be more numerical

and precise (Bryman, 2008; Merriam, 1998). After reviewing the differences between

qualitative and quantitative design characteristics, this study used the characteristics of a

qualitative design with a quality focus, phenomenological philosophy, investigative goals of

understanding and discovery, flexible design, small and nonrandom sample, data collection of interviews and documents, inductive mode of analysis, and comprehensive and descriptive findings.

Within qualitative research, there is a sequence outlined to understand the process (Bryman, 2008). This sequence is as follows: "(a) start by identifying the general research questions, (b) select the relevant sites or subjects to be studied, (c) collect relevant data, (d) interpret the data that was collected, (e) conceptualize and theorize about the work, which may lead to reviewing the research questions to refine them and collecting additional data, and (f) writing the findings along with the conclusion" (Bryman, 2008, p. 370-372). The purpose of using qualitative research is to study a problem that needs to be explored (Creswell, 2007).

In this study, the general research questions were identified and all relate to the main question of whether meeting your needs and the needs of your partner directly correlates to relationship satisfaction confirmed by the abundance of laughter. The relevant sites or subjects were studied are related to relationships, emotional needs, satisfaction and laughter found in relationships, etc. The data that was collected consisted of information related to the research and interview questions, demographics of the subjects, and interview content. The data was interpreted partially during the interviews as the participants answered the interview questions and partially after the interviews as the researcher evaluated the results of the interviews and how the responses related to the data and research questions.

A qualitative researcher is interested in understanding how people make sense of the world they live in and discover how their experiences affect their world (Merriam, 1998). This type of study can reveal how many elements can come together to complete the whole (Merriam, 1998). According to Creswell (2007), the qualitative researcher used a theoretical lens to observe

certain characteristics to form a good qualitative study. These characteristics for the researcher included:

1. Spending time in the field, collecting multiple forms of data, and summarizing it in detail,

2. Being used as a key instrument of data collection focusing on documents, observing behavior, and analyzing the opinions of those participating in the study,

3. Identifying a research approach, and in this case, it was phenomenological,

4. Starting with a single focus, and then as the study progressed, expanding the focus by incorporating a compare/contrast model,

5. Validating the accuracy of the data collection,

6. Presenting the study starting in specifics and expanding to generalities,

7. Writing in a persuasive manner to capture one's attention and make the reader feel that he or she was a part of the study,

8. Including in the study the researcher's personal experiences related to the subject matter, which affected all aspects of the study, and

9. Making sure that the study addressed ethical issues throughout all phases of the research (Creswell, 2007).

Methodology - Phenomenological

The qualitative methodology that was applied to this study was phenomenology and the research was conducted using interviews. The definition of a phenomenological study is one where participants describe how they perceive a phenomenon based on their personal history and experiences (Creswell, 2013). While there are different approaches to phenomenology, the design of this study was based on Moustakas's (1994) transcendental or psychological phenomenology. Critical to this approach is that the research was directed by the participant's

interpretation of a phenomenon, and not based on the researcher's interpretations (Creswell, 2013). For the study, women who are married were interviewed. For the purpose of this study, the couples were married for at least three years, and their basic needs according to Maslow, physiological and safety needs, were met.

For this study, data was collected for review in the form of interview transcripts. The investigator translated the data into statements or words that best capture the information. The coded words extracted from the interviews provided a descriptive summary of how participants interpret a given phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). According to Moustakas this process is known as horizonalization. Next, the researcher grouped the coded elements into themes (Creswell, 2013). It was important for the researcher to document the interview responses that influenced how "the participants experienced the phenomenon, called imaginative variation or structural description" (Creswell, 2013, p. 61).

Structured Process of Phenomenology

Structural and textural descriptions of the phenomenon were combined in order to present "the essence of the experience" (Creswell, 2007, p. 60). This will help to codify the common, experience or experiences, shared by participants. The purpose of doing this is to expose to the reader the hidden patterns that everyone experiences unconsciously and to have the reader come away with a conscious understanding of what has been hidden in plain sight. Until your unconscious becomes conscious, it will direct your life, and you will call it fate (Jung, 1949).

Research Design

Research data was obtained through structured interviews with 15 participants who were selected through a purposive sampling approach. The data sources for this research was selected with consideration for the population as defined subsequently. Participants were selected by

meeting defined criteria, and then via purposive sampling within this subpopulation. Adherence to human subjects considerations were taken into account pursuant to standards established by Pepperdine University and the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

The strategy for sampling in this study was consistent with Michael Quinn Patton's (1990) Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods. Patton suggested that there are several different strategies to purposefully selecting participants. One of these strategies is homogenous sampling to describe some particular subgroup in depth. For this study, the sample was from a group of women who attended the conference. There was some debate as to the appropriate sample size in a phenomenological study, with the key determination factor being one of saturation. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), the point when the collection of new data does not shed any further light on the issue under investigation is referred to as saturation. Guidance from Creswell (1998) for phenomenological sample size is 5 to 25. Richards and Morse (2013) suggested a sample size of at least six. The sample size of this study was 15 female participants who are married for a minimum of three years and have their physiological and safety needs met, according to Maslow.

Participant selection. The sample population consisted of those individuals who met the inclusion criteria and were invited to be a part of the study. The inclusion criteria specify characteristics that are considered for participant selection (Richards & Morse, 2013). According to James Spradley (1979), the participants were those who are clear on what data are being collected, know the information required, were prepared to share their perspectives on the phenomenon of being married, and were available to participate. Pepperdine University sponsors a Lifelong Learning Conference for women in leadership in which different presenters are invited to impart knowledge on certain topics to an audience of affluent women on a monthly

basis in Pacific Palisades, California at the home of a Pepperdine alumnae. Yakov Smirnoff was

a presenter at the November 9, 2017 conference discussing the topic "Challenges successful

women have in romantic relationships" .

From a list of conference attendees, there were over 100 women who were eligible for

this study. Being a married couple for a minimum of three years was the first inclusion

requirement to participate in this study. A criteria for exclusion was that participants must live

within a 20-25 mile radius of the researcher's residence. Another criteria was that the

participants are willing to be audio recorded for at least 90 minutes to 120 minutes sometime

during the timeframe of the last two weeks of February, March, and the first week in April. For

maximum variation, it was ideal that participants who have been married for different lengths of

time more than the three years minimum. Men were excluded from this study, but a separate

study can be conducted to focus on the male perspective regarding relationship needs in

marriage.
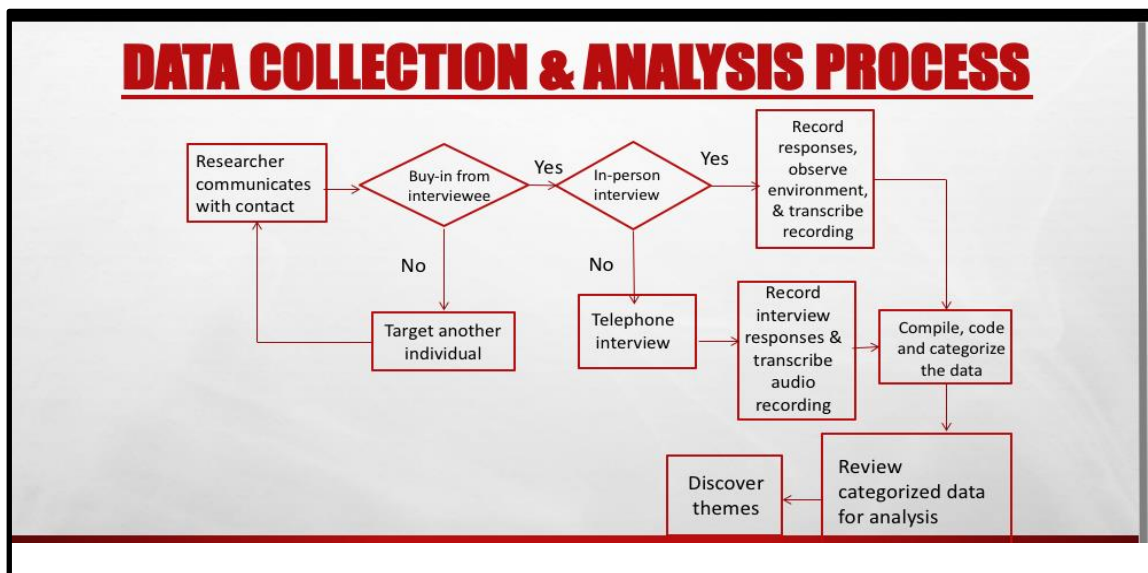
Figure 1. Data Collection & Analysis Process flow chart to explain the process the author
followed to find interview subjects, transcribe the interviews, code and categorize the data, and
identify similar themes from each interview.

Human subject consideration. This research was conducted in a manner consistent with Title 45, Part 46 of the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, Pepperdine's IRB, and ethical principles of the Belmont Report. An individual consent form was shared with and signed by each participant in the study. A detailed application was submitted to the Pepperdine University Graduate and Professional School IRB, including the IRB application, Informed Consent Form (Appendix B), and Interview questions designed for the study.

Participation in the study were voluntary. Individual-identifying information has been removed from any retained transcripts. Participants' rights included: "(a) the right to be fully informed about the study's purpose and about the involvement and time required for participation, (b) the right to confidentiality and anonymity, (c) the right to ask questions to the investigator, (d) the right to refuse to participate without any negative ramifications, (e) the right to refuse to answer any questions, and (f) the right to withdraw from the study at any time" (Richards & Morse, 2013, p. 263). Participants were ensured confidentiality and anonymity, verbally and in writing, and informed consents were secured.

A number of different risks, benefits, and mitigations to participants were considered. The most significant benefit of participating in this study was that participants would be sent a copy of the findings, if asked, which would hopefully help them to identify and meet their partner's needs, therefore, increasing the amount of happiness and laughter in their relationships.

All of their data was kept confidential, and personally identifiable records were kept anonymous. Once the study was complete, all data with personally identifiable information was destroyed. Demographic data was gathered, but it was stripped of all identifiable characteristics. The researcher is responsible for ensuring that these commitments to maintain confidentiality are

upheld. The commitments are further outlined in the request for participation and Pepperdine's IRB.

Data collection. Data collection was focus on the needs that couples have in a relationship, challenges in identifying those needs, and strategies for meeting their needs. This data was used to increase awareness and expose patterns that are hidden in plain sight, which will give, couples a roadmap to find and meet their partner's needs. For this research, interviews were conducted by teleconference based on availability of the participants. The participants in the study were from a list of conference attendees who live within a 15 mile radius of the researcher's residence. The attendees selected had the option of participating in this study. They received an invitation explaining the study and inviting them to be part of it. During this initial contact of the possible participants, the approved IRB recruitment script was followed. A consistent methodology was applied to each interview as part of this study. The interviews begun begin with general greetings and gratitude for the participant's time. Next, the specific interview protocol was discussed, which included the selection criteria for participating in the study, an overview of the interview topic, an overview of how the actual interview was conducted, and what would happen once the data was collected. It would also explain to each participant how the interview protocol was formulated by the researcher and reviewed by a preliminary review committee as well as the dissertation committee. At this point, participants were reminded of the informed consent form, which was shared with them prior to the start of the interview.

Before the interview began, each participant received by email an overview of the mechanics of a qualitative, phenomenological study, executed as a semi-structured interview. Next, the participant was asked if she will permit the interview to be audio recorded. Once permission was granted, the interview proceeded.

Interview protocol. The data-gathering instrument was a set of open-ended interview questions that helped to answer the four research questions. As opposed to leveraging an existing or previously used instrument, the data collection instrument was created independently by the researcher. Developing a new instrument was important because the questions that needed to be addressed in the data gathering process were specific to married couples. The responses that were gathered helped to identify individual needs that spouses had within their relationship, challenges to meeting those needs, and strategies that guided the couples to a successful and happy relationship. Semi-structured interviews along with specific follow-up questions were asked to expand upon responses in order to get more detail. Once the interview was completed, a request was made for the participant to make herself available for future clarification or follow-up questions, if necessary.

Relationship Between Research and Interview Questions

The interview questions were extension of the four research questions as seen in the chart below. Question #1 was what strategies and practices do married couples use to meet each other's needs? In my observations, it has been seen that couples most of the time do not know what are the needs of their partner. We are probing in the area that is gender dominant of what people need, looking at women and they want love, whereas men want respect, so the interview questions were designed not to lead the interviewee, but to uncover what the interviewee feels and learn how they express what they need.

For question #2, what challenges do married couples face in their effort to meet each other's needs? Once they recognize that their needs may be different, then the next step is to learn how to communicate what you need, recognizing that the couples are learning a foreign language and trying to understand what their partner needs are. For question #3, how do married

couples measure and track success in meeting each other's needs? By using the analogy of a

foreign language, and once you and your partner understand each other's needs, then the next

step was to make sure that this understanding was translated into actions through feedback to

make sure you are getting the results that you want or are hoping for and to ensure your

relationship is on the right track. For question #4, what recommendations would married couples

give to future married couples in meeting each other's needs? The highest level of mastery is

when you learn something, and you can teach it to someone else, and at this final stage, the

couples had learned from one another and was passing on the information that they learned to

others.

Table 1

Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
RQ 1: What strategies and practices do married couples use to meet each other's needs?	1. How do you identify each other's needs? 2. How do you make sure that what you think your partner needs is actually what he or she needs? 3. What forms of communication do you use to identify each other's needs? (auditory, visual, or kinesthetic?) 4. Can you identify your partner's needs observing their behavior, and what does it tell you? 5. What specific clues help you identify your partner's needs? 6. What among your needs do you find least met?
RQ 2: What challenges do married couples face in their effort to meet each other's needs?	1. What challenges do couples have communicating desired needs to one another? 2. What gets in the way of meeting each other's needs? 3. What obstacles do you have to overcome in an effort to meet each other's needs? 4. Please name some specific examples when your needs were not met. 5. Please name some specific examples when your partner's needs were not met. 6. How do you express your dissatisfaction with your unmet needs?

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
RQ 3: How do married couples measure and track success in meeting each other's needs?	1. What are the characteristics of a successful relationship to you? 2. What are the indicators of needs being met? 3. What are the indicators that the needs have not been met? 4. How do you feel when your needs are met? 5. What life scenarios assisted you in meeting each other's needs? 6. Can laughter be a gauge of needs being met? Explain how.
RQ 4: What recommendations would married couples give to future married couples in meeting each other's needs?	1. What is the most important thing that you learned on how to meet your partner's needs? 2. What would you tell a couple who just got married about meeting each other's needs? 3. How would you describe to future married couples the importance of meeting each other's needs? 4. Can laughter be one of the benefits of meeting each other's needs?

Reliability and Validity of the Study

An essential element of credible research is the assurance that the instrument in the interview protocol is both valid and reliable. Validity is related to the accuracy of a data set. Reliability is the consistency in which the data is collected should the experiment be replicated. Both elements were discussed in detail below.

Validity is a term often avoided in qualitative research because it is erroneously seen as an indicator of attitudes towards analysis or interpretation that do not fit with qualitative measures (Richards & Morse, 2013). In addition, Creswell and Miller (2000) argued that validity can be altered based on how the researcher defines validity as part of the study design. Since the

researcher has unconscious and conscious biases, it is important that the research design is based on sound data (Richards & Morse, 2013). According to the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (as cited in Richards, 2005), validity is defined as "well founded and applicable; sound and to the point; against with no objection can fairly be brought" (p. 139). For the instrument, validity was established in be following a four-step process:

Step 1: Prima facie validity. Prima facie is a legal term that broadly translated means at first sight. The first step of establishing instrument validity was Prima Facie validity. The interview questions were designed based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) and Willard Harley's *His Needs, Her Needs* (2016). The dissertation committee shared a number of interview questions with the researcher's cohort of doctoral candidates as examples of reliable and valid questions. Using these research questions as a basis, the research questions for this study were drafted to be aligned and consistent in terms of question content and structure.

Step 2: Peer review validity. Next, this researcher selected two students from the Pepperdine University doctoral program with whom the researcher has worked with on other projects and has a mutual level of trust, so they were asked to serve as peer reviewers. There are two peer reviewers, one male and one female, who would have different, gender-specific points of view on interview questions which will be valuable and provide a better balance to this research. After a thorough review and discussion of the research questions connected to this study, the peer reviewers provided edits, questions, comments, and revisions to the interview questions.

Step 3: Pilot interviews. Based on the protocol completed in Step 2, a pilot interview was conducted with two other doctoral students in order to test the interview questions to see if they were adequate and proved the quality of the questions for the interview. At the end of the

interview, the interviewees provided input with regard to clarity, wording, and understandability of the interview questions. Feedback from the pilot interviewees was incorporated into the final instrument and interview protocol.

Step 4: Expert review. Following this peer review, the results was sent to a second group of reviewers: the dissertation committee. The dissertation committee reviewed, asks clarifying questions, and provided feedback on the interview questions. Additionally, the dissertation committee provided feedback as part of the preliminary defense. The feedback from the dissertation committee was incorporated into the final version of the interview questions.

According to Richards and Morse (2013), there are two general guidelines for research design validity: (a) the fit of the question, data, and method; and (b) ensuring the researcher can properly account for each step in the analysis. As such, the following strategies were employed to ensure the validity of the qualitative research:

1. Triangulating data;

2. Using multiple raters to check validity of results;

3. Using descriptive text to illustrate the phenomenon experienced by participants;

4. Stating researcher biases; and

5. Sharing information that runs counter to results (Creswell, 2003, p. 196).

According to Sandra Mathison (1988), triangulation has become a critical component of qualitative evaluation. Triangulation helps control bias and reduces the risk of tainted results. The data used for this research was triangulated by using different data sources: a comprehensive literature review, semi-structured interviews conducted with 15 females who met the criteria and qualify for inclusion to be in this study, and member-checking to help confirm the accuracy of the data through follow up questions based on their respective interviews for

clarification. The findings of the research were explained with considerable detail. In addition, descriptive quotes and examples from the participants were used. Researcher bias was considered, identified, and described in the statement of personal bias within this chapter. Two doctoral students were asked to review the transcripts of the interviews to assist in identifying the key thematic findings. A debrief session was scheduled to obtain feedback from the researcher's peers to add to the validity of the design. Finally, the researcher secured the assistance of two external auditors. Both of these auditors have EdDs in Organizational Leadership, and are well versed in research and research methodology. The auditors were asked to review the research design as well as the results.

In short, reliability was defined by a study that would yield the same results if it were repeated (Richards & Morse, 2013). A more detailed definition comes from Marion Joppe (2000):

The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability, and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable (p. 1).

Reliability of a qualitative study is highly correlated to trustworthiness. To establish studies with high reliability and validity in qualitative research, Seale (1999) stated that the "trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability" (p. 266). Not all scholars are aligned on the importance of reliability in qualitative research. One such objector is Stenbacka (2001), who argued that references to reliability are unnecessary in qualitative research since reliability infers measurements. Preceding Stenbacka (2001), Lincoln and Guba (1985) similarly stated that reliability in

qualitative research is less relevant. "Since there can be no validity without reliability, a

demonstration of the former [validity] is sufficient

to establish the latter [reliability]" (p. 316). Additionally, Patton (2002) asserted that reliability is

a direct result of validity in qualitative research.

Statement of Limitations and Personal Bias

Acknowledgement of personal bias is an important process for any and all research

(Creswell, 2003). From the researcher's perspective, there seems to be a lot of literature that is

biblically driven with gender differences helping to identify that the needs of men and women

are different. At the same time, there are more modern views stating that men and women are

the same, therefore their needs are the same. Thus, this researcher decided to pursue this project

to find the truth to see if objective research can be conducted to find which is more accurate the

biblically-rooted dogma or the modern views of relationships, and which school of thought will

sustain the happiness and laughter for the life of a relationship.

The researcher's bias is based on the fact that he was married and divorced and

recognizing that there is a gap between identifying and acknowledging that happiness comes in

stages within a relationship. His observations of the audiences in his comedy shows for the last

20 years and questioning 4 ½ million people from the stage has revealed that everyone

experiences happiness and laughter in the honeymoon stage of their relationship, but they are not

able to sustain this in many cases, ending the relationship in divorce. Using his background with

a Master's Degree in Applied Positive Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania, this

researcher was compelled to pursue the question of how to attain and sustain happiness and

laughter in his personal relationship and has spilled over into the recognition of laws of laughter,

which he is attempting to uncover in this study.

A phenomenological study is predicated upon a group or individual having comprehension of a given phenomenon. Phenomenology also requires a baseline understanding of assumptions and biases held by the researcher so as to refrain from impacting the validity a study. The strategy of bracketing was used to help comprehend the assumptions and inherent biases, and the underlying personal experiences. The bracketing allowed for those personal experiences and biases to be understood, to allow the focus to be solely on the experience of the participants in the study, and how they experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). For this study the researcher were bracketed all of the assumptions and biases into themes, and were compared to the thematic results of the study.

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed and transcribed the interview data by utilizing notes, data entry and storage, and coding. Notes were written when ideas or insights emerged from the researcher's personal observations of the participants, as well as from interview responses that have led to follow-up questions. Data gathered from the interview process, memos, and observational notes were transcribed. The transcribed data was segmented into codes. Inductive coding was selected as the analysis approach. Inductive coding is when the researcher does not bring a predetermined idea of what types of codes to use during the coding process. An inductive coding procedure was utilized that began with an interim analysis. Next the responses were coded, and grouped into themes. Finally, these themes were examined to provide explanations of the problem. The inductive approach is used frequently as part of qualitative data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). "The reasons for utilizing an inductive approach were to condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief, summary format; establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data; and develop a model or

theory about the underlying structure of experiences or processes which was evident in the raw data" (Thomas, 2003, p. 5).

From this study's inductive analysis, themes emerged from participant responses. During the coding process, a master list was kept of all the commonalities, codes, and potential themes discovered during the coding process. The results of the coding helped to answer the research questions. The researcher utilized the coding process to create categories within the inductive analysis process. The labeling, description, text, links, and associated models helped to connect the categories to the research questions. After the initial coding, to establish interpreter reliability, a co-reviewer process was employed using two external co-reviewers individually to assess the researcher's coding. These co-reviewers were experienced in qualitative research and have done extensive research in the study of leadership. Upon completion of the co-reviewers' assessment, a discussion was held between the researcher and the reviewers, and clarifications and revisions were made.. The results of the coding were translated into themes that correlate with the research questions and were presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

Inter-Rater Reliability

A three step process was used to ensure inter-rater reliability.

Step 1: The researcher coded the data individually by following procedures suggested by David Thomas (2003) for inductive analysis of qualitative data and described in the Data Analysis section of Chapter 3.

Step 2: Results of the individual coding process were reviewed by two peer reviewers with the goal of achieving consensus regarding the individual coding results. These reviewers were doctoral candidates in the Organizational Leadership program at Pepperdine University. The peer reviewers completed two doctoral courses in qualitative methods and data analysis, and

both completed dissertation work using a similar coding procedure. The coding strategy (Thomas, 2003) and the coding results were presented to the evaluators for verification. Recommendations for revisions to the resulting codes and categories were discussed between the researcher and the two external reviewers. The coding results were accepted only when the reviewers and the researcher agreed on their validity.

Step 3: If, at any time, the discussion between the researcher and the reviewers did not result in unanimous agreement, the unresolved points were presented to the dissertation committee to make a determination on final coding results.

Chapter 3 Summary

The objective of this research was to understand how to identify and satisfy your needs and the needs of your partner in order to bring about happiness within the relationship. The research questions have been restated and the research design explained. This research is characterized as a phenomenological study that uses a qualitative approach. The intent was to find the strategies that married couples use to identify and satisfy their partner's needs, understand the challenges, find solutions to track success, and provide recommendations for other couples in relationships. The qualitative methodology applied to this study was phenomenology, and the research was conducted through the use of interviews. In other words, this study sought to understand the phenomenological meaning with respect to the strategies and practices of married couples based on their experiences (Creswell, 2013).

The population that was a part of the study is defined as women who have been married for at least three year. Participants were identified based on purposeful sampling, which means the investigator will select participants because of characteristics that satisfy the stated criteria (Richards & Morse, 2013). In terms of human subjects consideration, this research was

conducted in a manner consistent with Title 45, Part 46 of the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, Pepperdine's IRB, and ethical principles of the Belmont Report.

Data was collected through comprehensive telephone interviews. Prior to the interviews, the researcher reviewed the interview protocol with participants. In addition, the participants were reminded of the researcher's commitment to keep all data confidential and anonymous. This assurance was given both verbally and in writing, and informed consent was shared with the participants. Several interview questions that correlate to the four research questions were presented. Validity and reliability was presented, along with a statement of researcher bias. The data analysis of the structured interviews were included transcribing the interview data and coding was done in search of themes in order to find a consensus of thought among the participants to identify needs, strategies, measures for success, and recommendations for other couples. This study should be enlightening to those who participate in the research, those who will read the paper, and those who have questions about how to meet a partner's needs and using share sense of humor to create a relationship full of love and laughter.

Chapter 4. Findings

Background/Introduction

This dissertation derived from recognition that in the beginning of a romantic relationship people experience a lot of laughter. When a relationship ends, there is hardly any laughter. It has been proven by research that in the honeymoon stage hormones secreted in our body enhance our ability to meet each other's needs and provide a sense of well-being to achieve the desired result, which would be procreation. Once that stage of the relationship is completed, mother nature stops supplying hormones like dopamine, oxytocin, and serotonin to help us in the process of creating happy and fun-filled relationships (Aron et al., 2005). Pfaff (1999) defines a drive as a neural state that energizes and directs behavior to acquire a particular biological need to survive or reproduce and all drives are associated with the activity of dopaminergic pathways and a few other specific neural systems, as well as other neural systems specific to each individual drive state (Fisher, Aron, & Brown, 2006).

The purpose of this investigation was to see if the formula that this scholar believes is the universal law of laughter would be supported by this research. The formula is: Needs being met + Shared sense of humor = Laughter. As a professional comedian, I use this formula to gauge the connection, mood, and level of interest of my audience. The question is can laughter be used as a gauge to identify whether your partner's needs are met and the shared sense of humor triggered the laughter?

Research Questions

The following research questions (RQ) were addressed in this study.

RQ1 – What strategies and practices do married couples use to meet each other's needs?

RQ2 – What challenges do married couples face in their effort to meet each other's needs?

RQ3 – How do married couples measure and track success in meeting each other's needs?

RQ4 – What recommendations would married couples give to future married couples in meeting each other's needs?

Data Collection

The research design for this study is a qualitative, phenomenological study using purposive sampling in the selection of the subjects, women who have been married for at least three years, who were interviewed. The data gathering instruments were interviews and researcher observations. Questions regarding strategies and practices of married couples when meeting each other's needs, challenges, measuring and tracking success, and recommendations were discussed with the subjects, analyzed, coded, and grouped in themes.

The researcher emailed participants an invitation to participate in the study with information about the phenomenon being explored and a consent form explaining all protections in place to keep the process confidential. They were also told that any identifiable information would be removed from the process to ensure safety and confidentiality. For this study, data was collected for review in the form of interview transcripts. Interview times were set up and the interviewees were given a conference call number. All interviews lasted approximately 30-60 minutes in length and were recorded.

The investigator translated the data into statements or words that best captured the information. The coded words extracted from the interviews provide a descriptive summary of

how participants interpret the phenomenon being explored. Next, the researcher grouped the coded elements into themes (Creswell, 2013).

Participant Selection

The sample population was individuals who met the inclusion criteria and were interested in being a part of the study and sharing their perspectives on the phenomenon of being married, and was available to participate within a short time frame. Pepperdine University sponsors a Lifelong Learning Conference for women in leadership in which different presenters are invited to impart knowledge on certain topics to an audience of affluent women on a monthly basis in Pacific Palisades, California at the home of Pepperdine alumnae. From a list of conference attendees, there were over 700 women who were eligible for this study. Being a married couple for a minimum of three years is the first inclusion requirement to participate in this study. A criteria for exclusion is that participants must live within a 20-25 mile radius of the researcher's residence. Another criteria is that the participants were willing to be audio recorded for at least 90 minutes to 120 minutes. Also, that they were willing to be interviewed during the last week in March timeframe. For maximum variation, it was ideal to have participants who have been married for different lengths of time more than the three years minimum. Men were excluded from this study.

From this study, six women worked full-time jobs, three had part-time jobs, three were retired and two did not respond.   Two of the participants had been married for less than five years, four had been married between 10-20 years, three had been married between 20-30 years, three had been married between 40-50 years and three did not respond to this question. The majority of the participants have earned degrees, some of which were advanced: four had bachelor's degrees, seven had master's degrees, two had doctoral degrees and two did not

respond to this question. Table 2 shows the demographic information that was collected for this study.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Participant #1	Date of Interviews	Employment	Years Married	Year of Birth	Education Level
#1	March 2019	Full-time	N/A	N/A	MA
#2	March 2019	Full-time	7 months	1963	BA
#3	March 2019	Part-time	28 years	1964	BA
#4	March 2019	Part-time	23 years	1967	Dr.
#5	March 2019	Stay-at-home	17 years	1973	MA
#6	March 2019	Full-time	47 years	N/A	MA
#7	March 2019	Full-time	4 years	1983	BA
#8	March 2019	Retired	43 years	1952	MBA
#9	March 2019	Fulltime	10	1979	Dr.
#10	March 2019	Retired	40 years	1945	BA
#11	March 2019	Full time	15 years	1967	Masters
#12	March 2019	Retired	20	1949	Masters
#13	March 2019	Both, Own business, work from home	13 years	1980	MBA
#14	March 2019	Information was not divulged by the participant.			
#15	March 2019	Information was not divulged by the participant.			

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed and transcribed the interview data by utilizing notes, data entry and storage, and coding. Notes were written when ideas or insights emerged from the researcher's personal observations of the participants, as well as from interview responses that led to follow-up questions. Data gathered from the interview process and observational notes were transcribed. The transcribed data was segmented into codes. An inductive coding procedure was utilized that began with an interim analysis. Next the responses were coded, and grouped into themes. These themes were examined to provide explanations of the problem. The inductive approach is used frequently as part of qualitative data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The reasons for utilizing an inductive approach are to "condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief, summary format; establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data; and develop a model or theory about the underlying structure of experiences or processes which are evident in the raw data" (Thomas, 2003, p. 5).

From this study's inductive analysis, themes emerged from participant responses. During the coding process, a master list was kept of all the commonalities, codes, and potential themes discovered during the coding process. The results of the coding helped to answer the research questions. The researcher utilized the coding process to create categories within the inductive analysis process. The labeling, description, text, links, and associated models helped to connect the categories to the research questions. After the initial coding, to establish interpreter reliability, a co-reviewer process was be employed using two external co-reviewers individually to assess the researcher's coding. These co-reviewers are experienced in qualitative research and have done extensive research in the study of leadership. Upon completion of the co-reviewers'

assessment, a discussion was held between the researcher and the reviewers, and clarifications and revisions were made if necessary. The results of the coding were translated into themes that correlate with the research questions and are presented in this chapter.

Inter-Rater Reliability Process

A three-step process was used to ensure inter-rater reliability.

Step 1: The researcher code the data individually by following procedures suggested by David Thomas (2003) for inductive analysis of qualitative data and described in the Data Analysis section of Chapter 3.

Step 2: Results of the individual coding process were be reviewed by two peer reviewers with the goal of achieving consensus regarding the individual coding results. These reviewers were doctoral candidates as well in the Organizational Leadership program at Pepperdine University. The peer reviewers have completed two doctoral courses in qualitative methods and data analysis, and both will be completing dissertation work using a similar coding procedure. The coding strategy (Thomas, 2003) and the coding results were presented to the evaluators for verification. Recommendations for revisions to the resulting codes and categories were discussed between the researcher and the two external reviewers. The coding results were accepted unanimously when the reviewers and the researcher agreed on their validity.

Step 3: Since the researcher and the reviewers were in unanimous agreement, there were no unresolved points to be presented to the dissertation committee.

Data Display

The data in this study is organized according to each research questions and the corresponding interview question. From the interviews that were conducted, multiple key phrases and similar points of views were grouped together according to common themes on a

colored sticky note. Once they were sorted into themes that were outlined, frequency charts were introduced to summarize and to provide a visual representation of the results.

For this section of the analysis, a participant quote or two, which was extracted from the transcribed data, accompanies a description of each theme. To allow preservation and integrity of the data, statements and excerpts are reported verbatim yet any identifiable information has been removed. This resulted in some excerpts being incomplete sentences. The researcher has taken every precaution to maintain anonymity, by referencing the interviewees in order (e.g. Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), and so forth. Within this study, epoch was used as a subjective method in order to understand and take into account an unbiased view of the personal experiences of each participant.

Research Question 1

The first research question (RQ1) asked, "What strategies and practices do married couples use to meet each other's needs? A total of six interview questions were designed to answer this first research question. The six questions related to RQ1 are:

1. How do you identify each other's needs?

2. How do you make sure that what you think your partner needs is actually what he or she needs?

3. What forms of communication do you use to identify each other's needs? (auditory, visual, or kinesthetic?)

4. Can you identify your partner's needs observing their behavior, and what does it tell you?

5. What specific clues help you identify your partner's needs?

6. What among your needs do you find least met?

This question had a variety of responses. However, the majority of interviewees described communication as the most important strategy for meeting needs. The results are broken down into five categories and some examples are given below. The responses from the interview participants for these interview questions were analyzed for similarities in themes to form the overall responses to RQ1.

Interview question 1. "How do you identify each other's needs?"

The first interview question was "how do you identify each other's needs?" This was intended to answer the first research question in this dissertation study. Through the analysis of all responses to interview question 1, a total of five methods were identified. The themes that emerged from the 15 participants' comments were as follows: one participant mentioned texting (4%), three participants identified asking (13%), four participants said anticipation (17%), and five stated observation (22%), but the majority, 10 participants (43%), summarized their method of identifying their partner's needs through communication (see Figure 2).
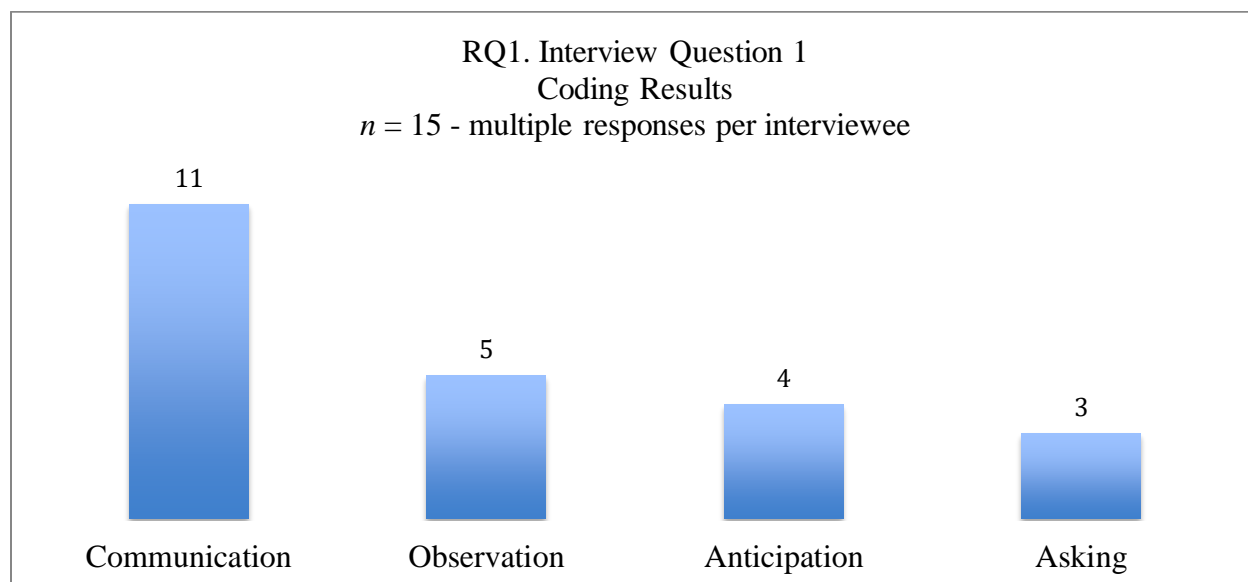
Figure 2. These are the most notable themes that emerged from couples who identify each other's needs. The figure demonstrates the fixed themes that emerged from responses to interview question 1. Data is presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Communication. In interview question 1, communication was overwhelmingly identified by 10 of the participants as the most significant method to identify their partner's needs in their romantic relationship. The interview participants were drawn to better understand the communication of needs. It was also important for them to communicate their own needs and to understand the needs of their partner. Participant #1 stated that, "We're both pretty good at communicating. It's one of those situations where you live with another person and what you do impacts that person and vice a versa. We have a busy schedule we have fur kids, cats and dogs, and you need to communicate quickly to determine who is walking the dogs or who is picking up dinner." Participant #8 said "Identify my own needs before expecting them to be met. I check in periodically verbally with my husband. I ask him how he is doing and if there is anything I can do to help him. Communication inquiry of the other person." Participant #9 said: "listening and empathy." Participant #12 said: "Express using my voice." Participant #15 said: "We just listen to what each other wants to do. We rarely disagree. If he wants to do something, I am ready, willing and (maybe) able. Vice versa. Example: Going camping for 15 years to a family camp. Swimming with the manta rays in Hawaii." Under the umbrella of communication, participants mentioned one specific type of communication that they use to correspond with their partner: texting. One participant identified that texting can be used in identifying your partner's needs. According to the participant, she and her husband text each other throughout the day sending fun pictures and flirtations. Of the five key phrases, viewpoints, or responses, only one of the responses collected mentioned texting, but it was included as an outlier result for its novelty and implications for future generations who are more comfortable with digital communications. Participant #1 indicated, "I love when he texts" implying that this meets her needs.
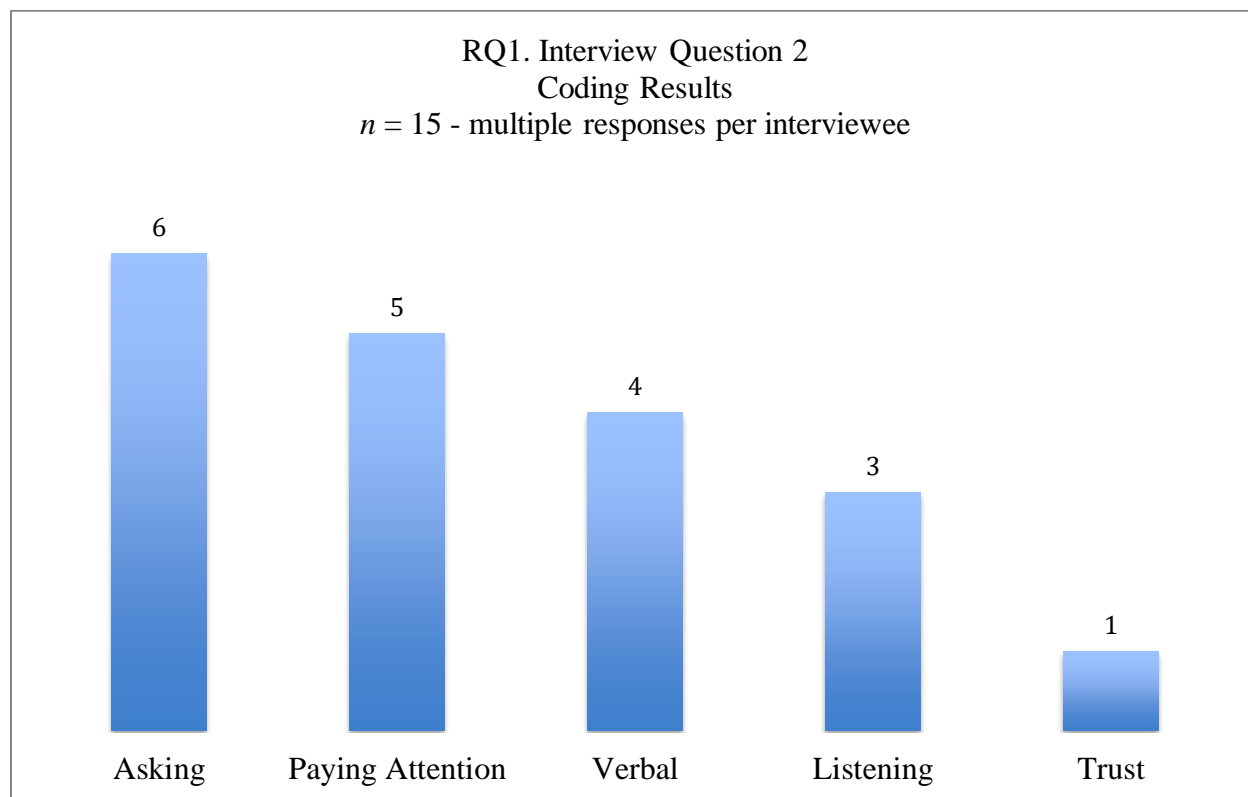
Observation.   Interview question 1 identified that observation of the partner's behaviors can give clues to understand needs.   Participant #13 said "…by his demeanor. I know that he is needing something when he is more withdrawn, then I see that a need is not being met." Participant #3 said, "You pay attention to body language, attitude, and energy." This was said by five out of the 15 women who were interviewed for this study.

Anticipation.   Interview question 1 identified that anticipation of the partners needs was a theme that surfaced with people who had been married for over three years. Their experience had helped them to anticipate the needs of their partner. Participant #7 said: "Read body language and anticipate needs. You know after a while." Participant #12 said: We anticipate because we know each other so well. If we have a conflict, I drop into my feminine and say this is what I see and this is how it makes me feel. It doesn't always make sense intellectually to him, but if I relate to him how I feel it will make sense to him. When I come from my heart and ask him to do something, I always get a yes." Participant #14: "I understand what he needs and when he is tired and why he might be cranky or stressed. We have known each other for 40 years so we just know each other. I know what little things make him happy and I try to do them, like having food in the refrigerator." Participant #2 said, "When you've been together for a long time, you can anticipate what the needs of your partners are. Sometimes you don't anticipate them correctly though."

Asking.   Interview question 1 identified that asking the partner directly or bluntly for the information of what the partner needs was a strategy used by three of the fifteen women. Participant #1 stated, "Usually I just ask him what do you need me to do today? Sometimes it's running errands and sometimes it's personal needs. Like do you need to talk?" Participant #7 said, "We just ask, don't assume." The women who expressed "asking" as a method of

identifying her partner's needs explained the importance of learning each other's needs through

intentional questions that instigate further learning about one another.

Interview question 2. The second interview question was "How do you make sure that

what you think your partner needs is actually what he or she needs?" This was intended to

answer the first research question in this dissertation study. Through the analysis of all responses

to interview question 2, a total of five markers were identified. The themes emerged as the

following: (a) trust - 1 (5%) participant, (b) listening - 3 (16%) , (c) verbal - 4 (21%), (d) paying

attention - 5 (26%), (e) asking - 6 (32%) (see Figure 3).

RQ1. Interview Question 2
Coding Results
$n = 15$ - multiple responses per interviewee

| Asking | Paying Attention | Verbal | Listening | Trust |
| 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 1 |

Figure 3. These are the most notable themes that emerged from couples make sure that what they think their partner needs is actually what their partner needs. The figure demonstrates the fixed themes that emerged from responses to interview question 2. Data is presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Asking clarifying questions. Interview question 2 identified that asking clarifying

questions to identify needs was a strategy that surfaced. Six out of the fifteen interview subjects

agreed that asking clarifying questions is important. Participant #6 said, "You need to ask clarifying questions." Participant #7: "Ask for what you want and don't just hope that people will figure you out." Participant #10: "Communicate, clarify, ask. Learn communication skills."

Paying attention (nonverbal cues). Interview question 2 identified that paying attention to nonverbal cues is also invaluable. Participant #3 said, "You need to pay attention to nonverbal cues." Participant #12, "I can see it on his face or I will ask." Participant #13, "…how he reacts to what I do for him." Participant #14 said, "It is a give and take. Does he appreciate what I do? I just leave him alone when he is cranky and not let it bother me."

Verbal communication. Interview question 2 identified that verbal communication is used for accurately understanding the needs of a partner. Participant #4 said, "You need to be aware of verbal response in everyday situations and question yourself." Participant #7 said, "We give feedback, and ask each other. I am more communicative, but he has grown in that area and directly asks." Participant #8 said "Communication. I would say that it seems like you need to be by yourself, would you like some time to yourself today. I would directly ask him."

Listening. Interview question 2 identified the importance of acutely listening to your partner for accuracy. It was shared that this was one way to ensure that your partner's needs are aligned with what you think they are. Participant #3 said, "It's really about listening well and reading between the lines." This finding was infrequent but a suggestion for people interested in this topic.

Trust. Interview question 2 identified a significant finding was trust, which included the way to ensure that what participants thought their partner needs is actually what they needed. Trust was only described by one of the 15 interview participants, and because of this, trust is an

outlier result for this particular question. Participant #9 said, "I trust my husband and vice versa. He is very smart and has not led me astray yet! I have confidence and trust in his abilities to determine what needs to be done." She stated that trust between the two of them created a firm foundation for their relationship and can teach us all how to better meet the needs of a partner.

  Interview question 3. The third interview question was "what forms of communication do you use to identify each other's needs? (Auditory, visual, or kinesthetic?)" This was intended to answer the first research question in this dissertation study. Through the analysis of all responses to interview question 3, a total of four needs were identified. The themes emerged as the following: (a) all of them- 1 (4%), (b) kinesthetic- 6 (24%), (c) visual- 6 (24%), (d) auditory- 12 (48%) (see Figure 4).
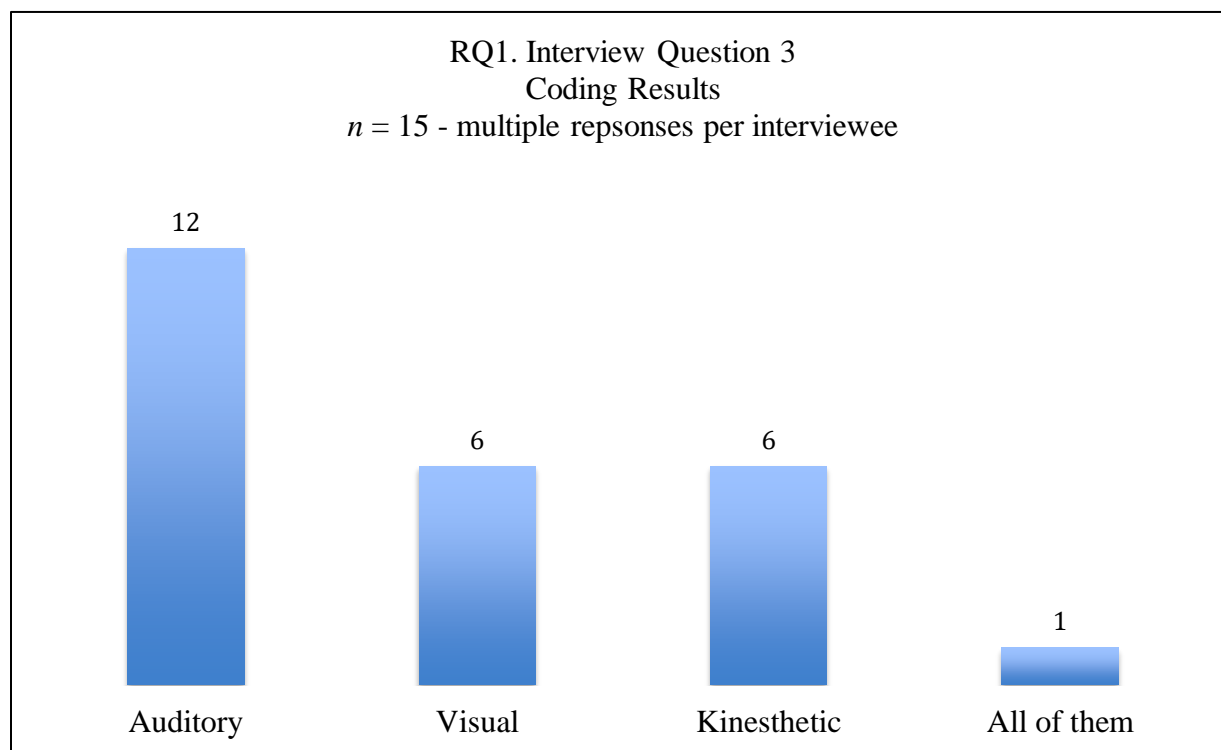
Figure 4. These are the most notable themes that emerged from women regarding what forms of communication they use to identify each other's needs. The figure demonstrates the fixed themes that emerged from responses to interview question 3. Data is presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Auditory. Interview question 3 identified Auditory as face-to-face communication and on the phone. Twelve of the interview participants mentioned that auditory was indeed important for the relationship. Participant#3 said, "He uses his words. He is an engineer." Participant #7 said, "I am a girl, and I love to talk. He will be upfront about letting me know when he's done listening." Participant #8 said "I actively listen, because if he's telling me his needs, but I don't listen, it's not helpful."
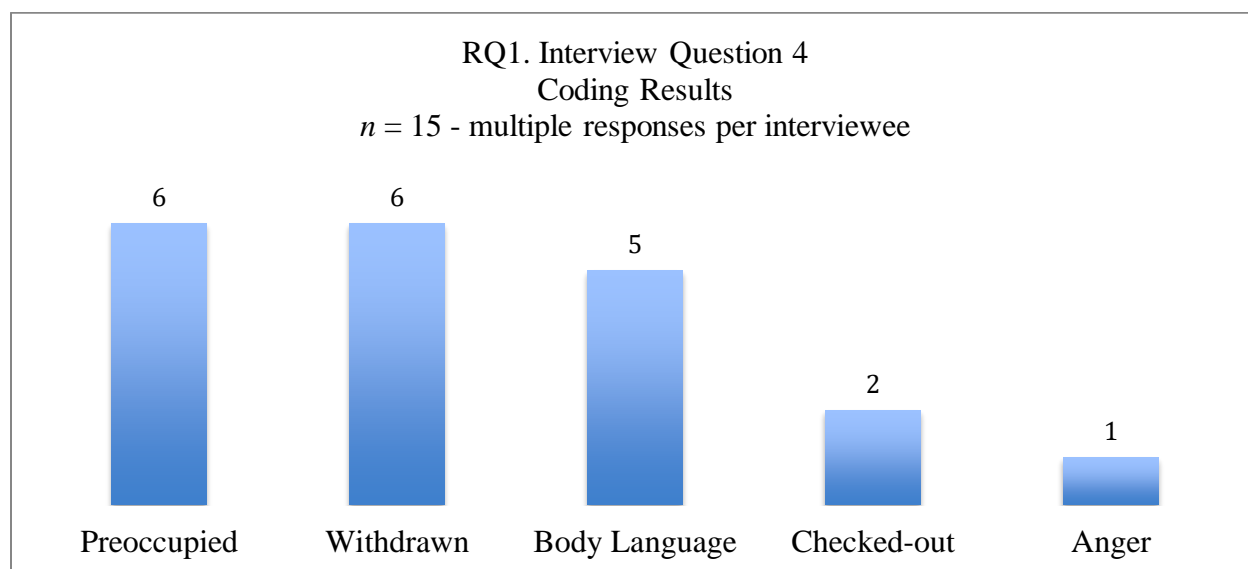
Visual. Interview question 3 identified Visual as a face-to-face communication. This theme also included writing and texting. Six of the interviewees mentioned this theme of visual needs. Participant #1 stated, "We send funny texts. I sent him one another day of a funny cartoon with cats and dogs in bed looking at him saying *what do you want*?" Participant #8 said, "I use visual cues. I can tell by his facial expressions. I can observe him visually and then I know to inquire more."

Kinesthetic. Interview question 3 identified Kinesthetic as feeling, touching, affection, and physical touch. This was mentioned by six of the 15 participants. Participant #3 said, "He makes a joke, as men often do, saying that he's a numbers guy. He teaches math. He describes to his students that he is married to a therapist, and he made a deal with me once a quarter he will have a feeling. And once a quarter, I would say a number." Participant #7 said, "When he hugs me back, I know that he had a stressful day." Participant #14 mentioned, "A nice goodbye kiss or hello kiss is important to keep in contact."

All of them. Interview question 3 identified that one person out of 15 interviewees felt that all the types of communication were used to identify each others needs: kinesthetic, visual and auditory. Participant #11 said, "I use all three senses to communicate." Participant #15: "All of these. However, I once said to my husband, 'I am not an auditory listener.' I meant, 'I

am not an auditory learner.' He started laughing pretty hard. I did not realize what I had said until he pointed it out."

Interview question 4. The fourth interview question was "Can you identify your partner's needs observing their behavior, and what does it tell you?" This was intended to answer the first research question in this dissertation study. Through the analysis of all responses to interview question 4, a total of five needs were identified. The themes emerged as the following: (a) anger- 1 (5%), (b) checked-out- 2 (10%), (c) body language- 5 (25%), (d) withdrawn- 6 (24%), (e) preoccupied- 6 (24%) (see Figure 5).

RQ1. Interview Question 4
Coding Results
$n = 15$ - multiple responses per interviewee

Theme	Count
Preoccupied	6
Withdrawn	6
Body Language	5
Checked-out	2
Anger	1

Figure 5. These are the most notable themes that emerged from women regarding what behaviors they could use to identify if the other's needs were being met. The figure demonstrates the fixed themes that emerged from responses to interview question 4. Data is presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Preoccupied. Interview question 4 identified preoccupied partners that were coming from work or concerned with something external. Six of the interviewees said that they experienced this theme. Participant #8 explained, "He is less likely to come out and ask me something. I have to observe his behavior, and if he seems tired or preoccupied, he's not making a lot of eye contact with me." Participant #14 said, "I can sense when he is preoccupied or

withdrawn."

Withdrawn.   Interview question 4 identified the theme withdrawn as partners looking for an opportunity to reduce stress by isolating himself. There were six women who reported this as a theme in this study. These women felt that they could tell if their partner's needs were being met based on how withdrawn they had become. Participant #10 explained, "He's a very quiet person, and he internalizes quite a bit." Participant #15: "Yes. For instance, if my husband is frustrated, over the years, I have learned to let him work things out. He does not want to discuss issues, especially work issues. When he comes home, he wants to forget about work and problems."

Body language.   Interview 4 identified body language as an important theme. Five women described this theme in various ways. Participant #7 said: "It's a sign of strength in a relationship. He may not communicate it with words, but he can show it through emotions, facial expressions, body language, tone of voice. Some men don't know how to communicate at all, so I feel lucky that he shows me." Participant #8 said: "If he is uptight and serious. He is not relaxed, being fun and laughing… that would be a way that I would know that he maybe needs something from me." Participant #9 said "…short, anxious. He gives me a look." Participant #10 said, "…observing the behavior and validating it." Participant #12 said **"**He didn't speak good English at first, so we had to rely on other things." Participant #15 said, "I usually can identify his mood through his body language if he is stressed out or not."

Checked-out. Interview question 4 identified the theme checked-out to demonstrate when their partners were not engaged. If a partner was not interested in talking or just was not present, these women would know that something was amiss. Two women mentioned that they could gauge the needs of their partner by whether or not he was checked out. Participant #8: "He gets

really quiet, and the biggest clue for me is that he doesn't smile." Participant #14 said, "If he's

quiet and cranky, I know to stay off and let him be."

Anger. Interview question 4 identified anger as showing frustration with what happened

in the outside world. Participant #7 said, "He can get angry with me." The participant remembers

cases when she recognized her partner's behavior as anger, and she would automatically give

him his space.

Interview question 5. The fifth interview question was "What specific clues help you

identify your partner's needs?" This was intended to answer the first research question in this

dissertation study. Through the analysis of all responses to interview question 5, a total of three

specific clues were identified. The themes emerged as the following: (a) irritated- 3 (23%), (b)

internalize- 3 (23%), (c) quiet/go for walk- 5 (38%) (see Figure 6).

RQ1. Interview Question 5
Coding Results
n = 15 - multiple responses per interviewee

Quiet/Walk	Internalize	Irritated
5	5	3
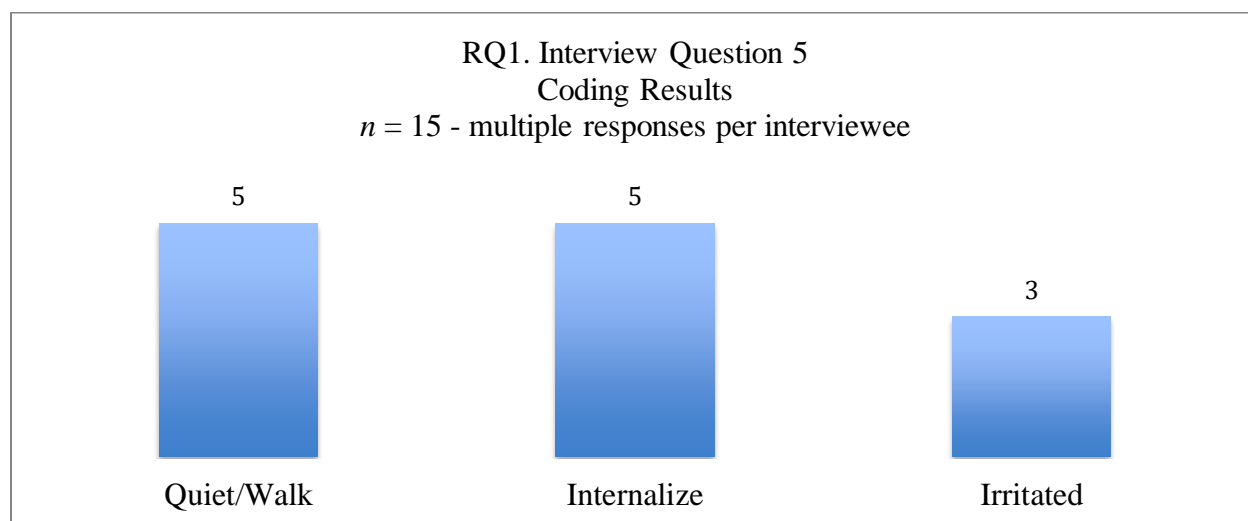
Figure 6. These are the most notable themes that emerged from women regarding what specific clues help identify partners' needs. The figure demonstrates the fixed themes that emerged from responses to interview question 5. Data is presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Quiet/Go for walk. Interview question 5 identified being quiet as a clue signaling that the

partner had a challenging day at work. Five women described the way their partner will become

quiet or decide to go out for a walk. For example, Participant #13 said, "He becomes more
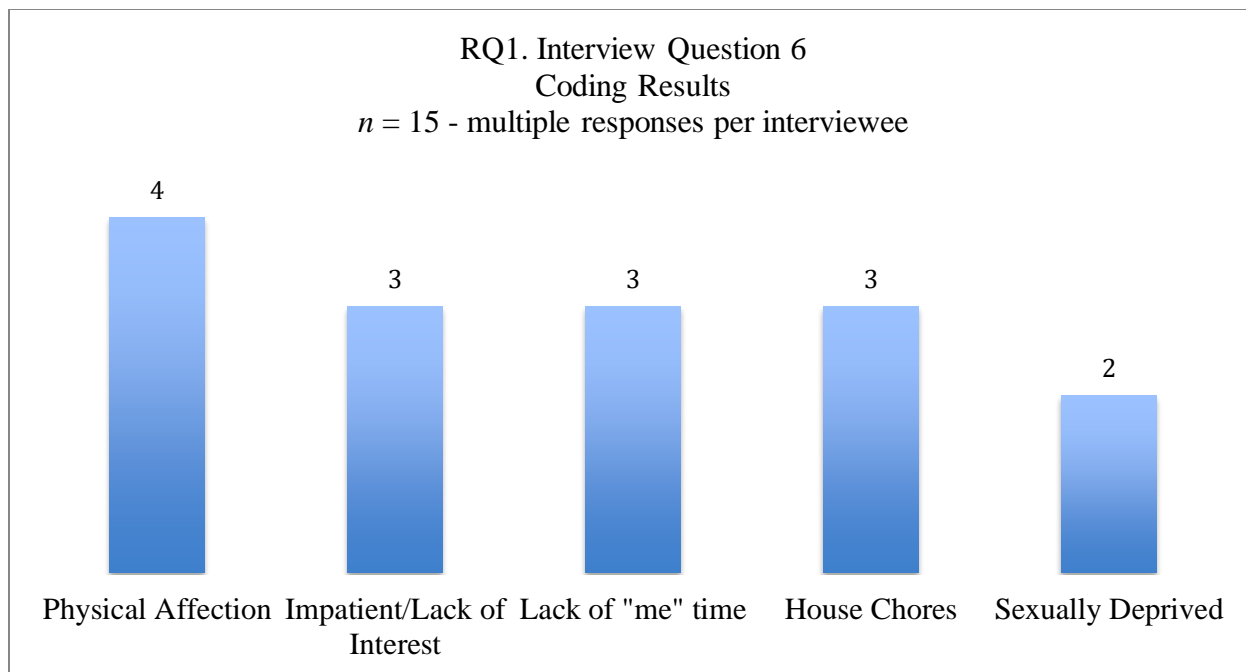
withdrawn, so I know his needs are not being met. He grew up in the environment where people did not share their feelings." She was describing the verbal and visual clues that signal to her that his needs are not being met.

    Internalize. Interview question 5 identified internalize which represented the introverted behavior to process, bounce back, and recharge. Five interviewees answered the same way identifying this theme. They described the way their partner internalized. Participant #10 stated, "His father was in World War II. He kept everything to himself. He believed it was part of being a man." Participant #11 said, "He tends to be a quiet person and he internalizes a lot."

    Irritated. Interview question 5 identified irritated, which was selected to describe a person lashing out at the family. Three people stated that they can tell when their partner is irritated. That is a clue that helps them identify the needs of their partner. Participant #6 said, " I would take cues from him. If he was irritated, I and the children would just let him be until he felt at home again." Participant #15 said, "If my husband is not relaxed (not going with the flow), then I know he is not himself. I know that I should talk with him about what needs are not being met."

    Interview question 6. The sixth interview question was "What among your needs do you find least met?" This was intended to answer the first research question in this dissertation study. Through the analysis of all responses to interview question 6, a total of five unmet needs were identified. The themes emerged as the following: (a) sexually deprived- 2 (13%), (b) house chores- 3 (20%), (c) lack of "me" time- 3 (20%), (d) impatient/lack of interest- 3 (20%), (e) physical affection- 4 (27%) (see Figure 7).

RQ1. Interview Question 6
Coding Results
$n = 15$ - multiple responses per interviewee

4	3	3	3	2
Physical Affection	Impatient/Lack of Interest	Lack of "me" time	House Chores	Sexually Deprived

Figure 7. These are the most notable themes that emerged from women regarding needs that are least met. The figure demonstrates the fixed themes that emerged from responses to interview question 6. Data is presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Physical affection. Interview question 6 identified physical affection as a theme which was described as a lack of physical intimacy. Four women in this study mentioned this theme. Participant #8 said "When I need hugs, emotional connection, he sometimes misses that. He is not in tune, so I have to verbally tell him simple things like please come here and give me a hug." Participant #9 said "…lack of display of affection." Participant #11 stated, "We have two young kids. We're both busy professionals. Sometimes there is physical affection. Affection for the sake of affection not leading to something else just being affectionate." Participant #12 said, "Sometimes I need a hug, but I don't have time to communicate it."

Impatient/lack of interest. Interview question 6 identified another theme described as impatient which was apparent when a partner showed lack of interest. Three of the interviews mentioned this theme. Participant #7 said, "There are days when I wish I could keep talking, but he is not listening anymore. He's not so patient talking about stuff that doesn't interest him. This

is something that is difficult in the relationship because I'm someone who works with people all the time and talks, so I can figure things out by talking out loud. He really doesn't have patience for that. Or interest really. So I don't get my emotional needs met by him. There's a lot of good, but I don't get my emotional needs met." Participant #15 mentioned, "Talking. My husband is happy being in his own thoughts. But, I just use my sister and friends, when I need to talk."

Lack of "me" time. Interview question 6 identified the theme of women who described giving everything to the family and not having time to self. They were not happy with the lack of "me" time and felt this was a prominent unmet need. Participant #1 said, "Between the chores, work, kids, and animals, there is not enough time for me." Participant #13 said, "I am taking care of everyone emotionally, so I am not taken care of."

House chores. Interview question 6 identified house chores as a need that was left unmet. This theme included grocery shopping, fixing garbage disposal, taking out trash, etc. Out of the 15 women interviewed, there were three women who resonated with this theme. This need was described by Participant #2 as "…household chores and forward thinking on what needs to be done." Participant #14 said, "Tasks are not getting completed at the time, like the lightbulb goes out, and he will not replace it right away. Kitchen sink gets clogged, and I ask him to look at it, but he will not do it for a couple days, and it makes me frustrated. It is important for me, but it is not important for him."

Sexually deprived. Interview question 6 identified sexually deprived as used to describe frustration from not having sexual contact. Two of the 15 women described this important aspect of a relationship. They were hungry for sexual intimacy, yet found this need left unmet. Participant #5 said, "I was waiting and waiting for him to appreciate me and he never would. Sexually, I was very deprived. I know people don't usually divorce for that, but in my case, that

added to me not feeling appreciated or loved."

Summary of RQ1. Research Question 1 sought to identify the challenges married couples face in their effort to meet each other's needs? A total of 27 themes were identified by analyzing key phrases, viewpoints, or responses to the three interview questions: (a) texting, (b) asking directly, (c) anticipation, (d) observation, (e) communication, (f) trust, (g) listening, (h) verbal, (i) paying attention, (j) asking clarifying questions, (k) all of them, (l) kinesthetic, (m) visual, (n) auditory, (o) anger, (p) checked-out, (q) body language, (r) withdrawn, (s) preoccupied, (t) irritated, (u) internalize, (v) quiet/go for walk, (w) sexually deprived, (x) house chores, (y) lack of "me" time, (z) impatient/lack of interest, (aa) physical affection.

From all of the responses, one thing became clear. All of these women find the most challenging aspect of a relationship to be in the communication of what their needs are so the marriage partner can strive to meet those needs. Similarly, all 15 interviewees expressed difficulty in recognizing their partner's needs. There was an interesting finding that the women who were married for longer periods of time had an ability to read body language, anticipate their partner's needs and compensate accordingly. It was almost as if communication was happening without saying a word. For chapter five, the findings will be discussed in comparison with the literature.

Research Question 2

The second research question (RQ2) asked, "What challenges do married couples face in their effort to meet each other's needs?" A total of six interview questions were asked to the participants in an effort to answer the second research question. The six questions related to RQ2 are:

1. What challenges do couples have communicating desired needs to one another?

2.   What gets in the way of meeting each other's needs?

3.   What obstacles do you have to overcome in an effort to meet each other's needs?

4.   Please name some specific examples when your needs were not met.

5.   Please name some specific examples when your partner's needs were not met.

6. How do you express your dissatisfaction with your unmet needs?

For this category the first three questions were combined because they were so similar and the responses were all the same. The other questions were designed to help these women identify the most important ingredients for successful romantic relationships. The findings are described below with examples that some of the interview candidates shared.

Interview questions 1/2/3. The first three interview questions are being combined, as they yielded very similar responses. The responses from the interview participants for the first three interview questions were analyzed for similarities in themes to form the overall responses to RQ2. Interview question 1. "What challenges do couples have communicating desired needs to one another?" Interview question 2. "What gets in the way of meeting each other's needs?" Interview question 3. "What obstacles do you have to overcome in an effort to meet each other's needs?" These questions were intended to answer the second research question in this dissertation study. Through the analysis of all responses to interview questions 1, 2, 3, a total of five obstacles were identified. The themes emerged as the following: (a) anger- 1 (4%), (b) social media- 1 (4%), (c) assumptions- 3 (13%), (d) time constraints- 8 (35%), (e) difficulty communicating needs- 10 (43%) (see Figure 8).

RQ2. Interview Questions 1/2/3
Coding Results
n = 15 - multiple responses per interviewee
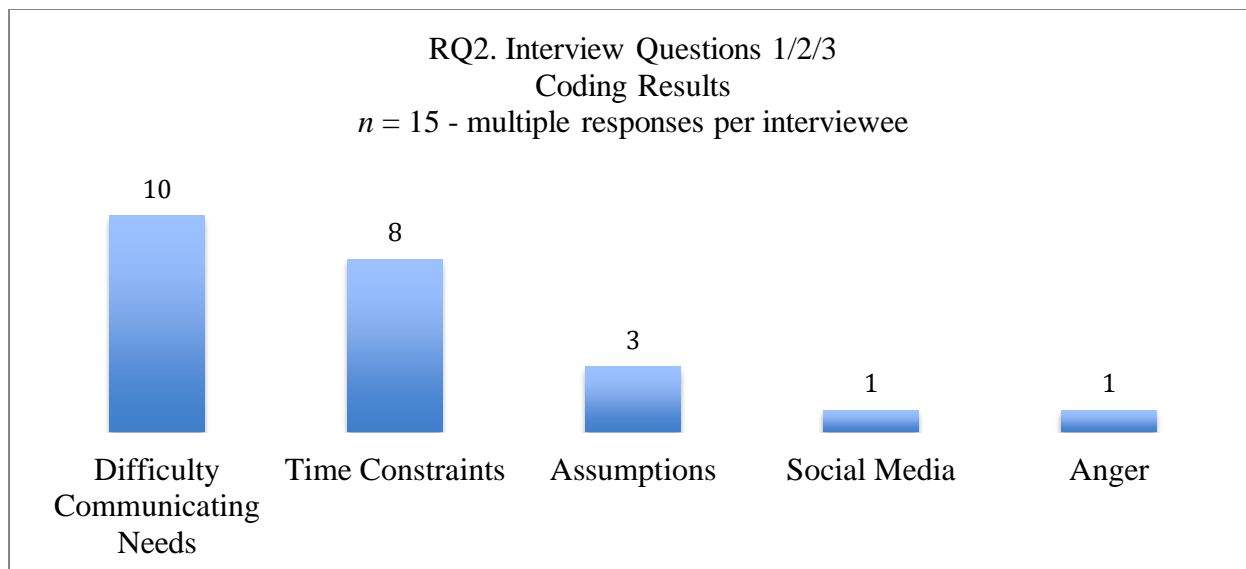
Figure 8. These are the most notable themes that emerged from women regarding the challenges and obstacles that get in the way of needs being met. The figure demonstrates the fixed themes that emerged from responses to interview questions 1, 2, and 3. Data is presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Difficulty communicating needs. Interview questions 1, 2, and 3 helped bring to the

surface the theme of difficulty communicating needs, asking for what they need, or not

communicating as an obstacle to meeting needs. Ten women in the study mentioned this theme,

which makes it quite significant. Participant #8 said, "The challenge is admitting that you do

need something. Most people have that front that they are independent. On some level, asking

for these things is difficult. And I don't think, sometimes people don't understand what they

need. Therapy made me see how needy I was because I did not get a lot of needs met by my

family. An obstacle would be not knowing you have a need, or fearing that it won't be well

received so you end up not communicating your needs." Participant #9 said "Communication

caused stress over money, the kids, not sharing common interests, sex can be an issue (not

enough or too much), middle-age crisis, career job stability, and communication over what is

your brand identity as a person." Participant #12 said, "It's not always clear. We need to be

careful not to emasculate him; we shouldn't go toe-to-toe with him, that isn't always effective.

It's better to drop into the feminine and tell him how it makes me feel." Participant #14 said, "When I communicate concerns, he feels like he needs to fix it. He already feels stress with his job, and then he will feel like he needs to solve my problem." Participant #15 said, "We are not mind readers. We need to articulate what we want to do (or not do) and why. Sometimes, we are too tired to do something or we have other plans. I have to make time for my husband and what he wants to do. Most of the time, I get to do whatever I want to do, like play bridge and Mahjong or go shopping, fly up to see our granddaughter, etc."

Time constraints. Interview questions 1, 2, and 3 identified that time constraints can be a barrier and obstacle for needs being met. This was used to describe activities that restrict or take away from meeting each other's needs (hobbies, jobs, children, opposite schedules). Eight of the 15 women interviewed mentioned this theme. Participant #7 said "Our schedules are different so there is not that connection all the time that I would like." Participant #11 said, "When you have been married with children for a while every day logistics of life is the routine. We both work. We have busy schedules. The kids have busy schedules." Participant #15 said, "Realistically, life is very hard and tiring. The challenges of juggling all the balls plus exhaustion and financial stress and addictions come from trying to overcome the stress."

Assumptions. These three interview questions identified the theme of assumptions. This surfaced with people who "thought" they knew their partner's needs. There were three times that this theme was mentioned in the study. Participant #9 said, "After being married for so long, sometimes you think you should just know about some things, but I think men sometimes are clueless so you really need to spell it out." Participant #13 said, "We get busy, and we assume that needs are being met. We don't communicate our needs; we just want them to know that we need them. But it goes on too long because we don't just ask for what we need."

Social media. Social media was identified as a theme that can be a distraction, temptation, escape, or avoidance of connection. One person in the study mentioned this theme. Participant #13 said, "Today, social media gives you a connection to other people that robs you of the connection with your spouse."

Anger. Interview questions 1, 2, and 3 identified anger as a theme. This represented a barrier that was difficult to overcome for the women in this study. One person in the study mentioned this theme. Participant #4 stated, "It is rare, but when there is anger, there is no connection and laughter."

Interview question 4. The fourth interview question in this section was "Please name some specific examples when your needs were not met." This was intended to answer the second research question in this dissertation study. Through the analysis of all responses to interview question 6, a total of five needs were identified. The themes emerged as the following: (a) all my needs are met- 2 (11%), (b) finances- 3 (16%), (c) feeling unappreciated- 3 (16%), (d) ball-dropping- 4 (21%), (e) family connection- 7 (37%) (see Figure 9).

RQ2. Interview Question 4
Coding Results
n = 15 - multiple responses per interviewee
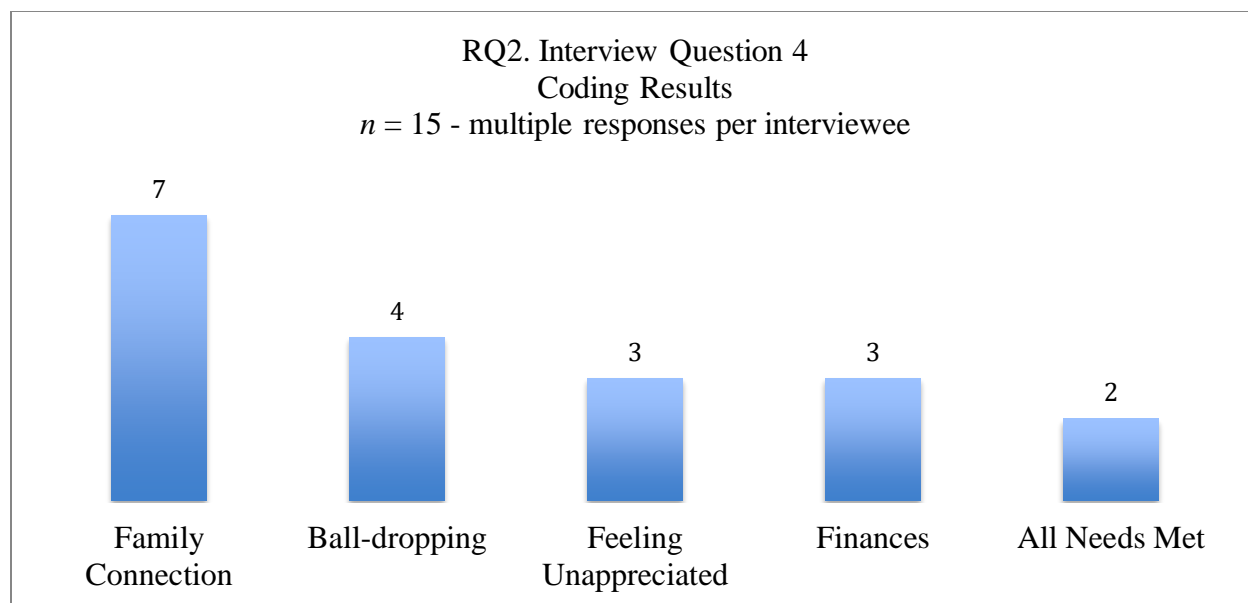
Figure 9. These are the most notable themes that emerged from women regarding examples of when needs were not met. The figure demonstrates the fixed themes that emerged from responses to interview question 4. Data is presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Family connection. This interview question identified the unmet need of family connection. This was stated by seven women who felt that the basic need for family connection is ignored. Participant #6 explained, "Probably the biggest thing was that he did not understand my close relationship with my family." Participant #7 said, "Monday through Friday I am not getting the time together that I want. We try to make up for that on the weekends." Participant #8 said, "My husband doesn't stand up to my mother-in-law in regards to her interactions with our child. We make a lot of jokes about her to smooth it over." Participant #13 stated, "When the kids need us, we take the focus off of each other."

Ball dropping. This theme of ball-dropping surfaced from four of the women who were interviewed. This is understood as an inability to follow through with what is expected. The women who mentioned this described feelings of frustration, disappointment, and pain. Participants #2, #3, and #4 had similar responses that their partners were not accountable for following through on doing what they said they would do. Participant #3 said, "I get upset when

he does that (doesn't follow through)." Participant #6 explained, "When I ask him to do some home chores, and he doesn't do it right away, I need to tell him that I will need to call the plumber, and it will cost us $200 for something we could have done ourselves. Then he gets things done."

Feeling unappreciated. This interview question identified the theme of "feeling unappreciated." This was expressed by women who carried a bigger load and didn't get recognition for it. There were three women who mentioned this theme. Participant #2 said, "There was a case that happened that I knew that it was important to him to take place, but I really resisted it. And resisted it for a very long time. But after we talked about this, I realized how important it was for him, so I did it. I felt it was such a big hurdle for me to overcome to do this, and I did not feel like it even registered on his radar. I was hurt by that, and I responded in the way that he absolutely hates. I lashed out at him. When we each get pushed, I tend to get very loud and very emotional. He retreats and that's not good."

Finances. This interview question also identified the theme of finances, which represented lack of employment and overspending by their partner leading to feelings of insecurity. Participant #1 said, "He didn't work for two years," which created fear. Participant #5 shared that her husband overspends money, which creates uncertainty and a sense of instability. There were three women in this study who mentioned this theme. Participant #9 said, "We fight about money consumption. I'm just more fluid with the spending."

All needs are met. The fourth interview question in this section of the study identified that all needs are met. There were two women who could not think of any needs that were not met by their partner. Participant #14 said "This one is hard for me. I am well provided for and all my needs are met." Participant #15 says, "My husband is pretty accommodating and easy

going. I can't think of any at the moment."

Interview question 5. The fifth interview question in this section was "Please name some specific examples when your partner's needs were not met." This was intended to answer the second research question in this dissertation study. Through the analysis of all responses to interview question 6, a total of five unmet needs of the partner were identified. The themes emerged as the following: (a) not doing their share- 2 (15%), (b) feeling not heard- 2 (13%), (c) feeling unappreciated- 3 (23%), (d) job interference 3 (23%), (e) lack of attention 3 (23%) (see Figure 10).
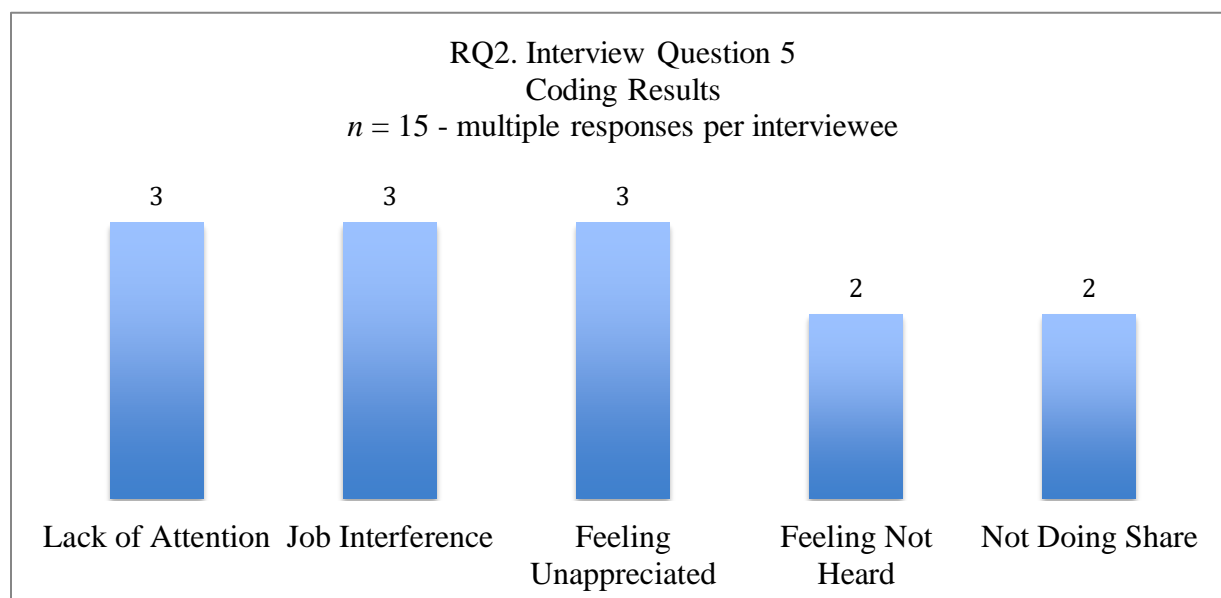
Figure 10. These are the most notable themes that emerged from women regarding examples of when their partners needs were not met. The figure demonstrates the fixed themes that emerged from responses to interview question 5. Data is presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Lack of attention. Three women in this study described how they thought they were not meeting their partner's needs by not giving him enough attention. Participant #10 stated, " He wanted more of my attention instead of me giving my attention to the children first." Participant #15 said, "I was really sick for two years and had no energy. He was very thoughtful, kind, and patient, but I am sure I was not as sexually available as I should have been at the time."

Job interference. Interview question six identified the theme of job interference. Three women interviewed felt that careers were getting in the way of relationship intimacy and connection. Participant #7 said, "My husband appreciates a home cooked meal, but there are days when I get home and cannot muster up the energy so I pick something up. I don't think he feels the love that he gets when I make a home cooked meal." Participant #12 said "Personal passion prescription- every Friday. We take a walk on the beach together because it gets crazy, and we can't meet each other's needs when we are not present for each other."

Feeling unappreciated. Interview question six identified the theme of feeling unappreciated. Three women described this theme throughout the interview process. They recognized that their partner's needs were not being met during times when they felt unappreciated. Participant #3 said, "I am a very strong person, and I tend to be very take charge. I don't want to be like that in my marriage all the time. I'd like him to take charge. But I think over the course of so many years, he pulls back a little bit that I was getting resentful. He feels that he's not being heard. He brings up something that he feels is important, but I don't see it that way. He wants the validation that he's a provider. Yes, we are a team, but my voice and my opinion matters." Participant #5 shared that her partner did not feel appreciated which indicated his needs were not met. Participant #11 said, "A man wants to be a man and wants to be validated."

Feeling not heard. Interview question six identified the theme of women whose partners did not feel heard. There were two women who referenced this theme. Participant #8 said "He doesn't want to have the conversation, but I force him to have it." Participant #11 stated that "for him, when he feels like his needs are not being met is when he feels like he is not being heard. He brings it up in a way that he feels he is bringing up something important up, but I don't

realize that it is important so he doesn't feel heard." She continued, "I am a strong person and I take charge. Over the years he pulled back and let me do more, and then I got resentful for doing so much. He wants the validation that he is the provider, his voice and his say matters."

Not doing their share. The fourth interview question introduced the theme that women described as their partner not doing their share. These women described that they carried more of the load and the partners felt inadequate. There were two women who referenced this theme. Participant #1 mentioned that her husband was frustrated because he could not provide for the family, and she was the main family provider and carried the load for two years. Her husband felt guilty for not being able to support his family.

Interview question 6. The sixth interview question in this section was "How do you express your dissatisfaction with your unmet needs?" This was intended to answer the second research question in this dissertation study. Through the analysis of all responses to interview question 6, a total of five ways of expressing dissatisfaction were identified. The themes emerged as the following: (a) crying/sadness- 1 (6%), (b) quiet-3 (19%), (c) find practical solutions- 3 (19%), (d) argument 4 (25%), (e) yelling/anger 5- (35%) (see Figure 11).
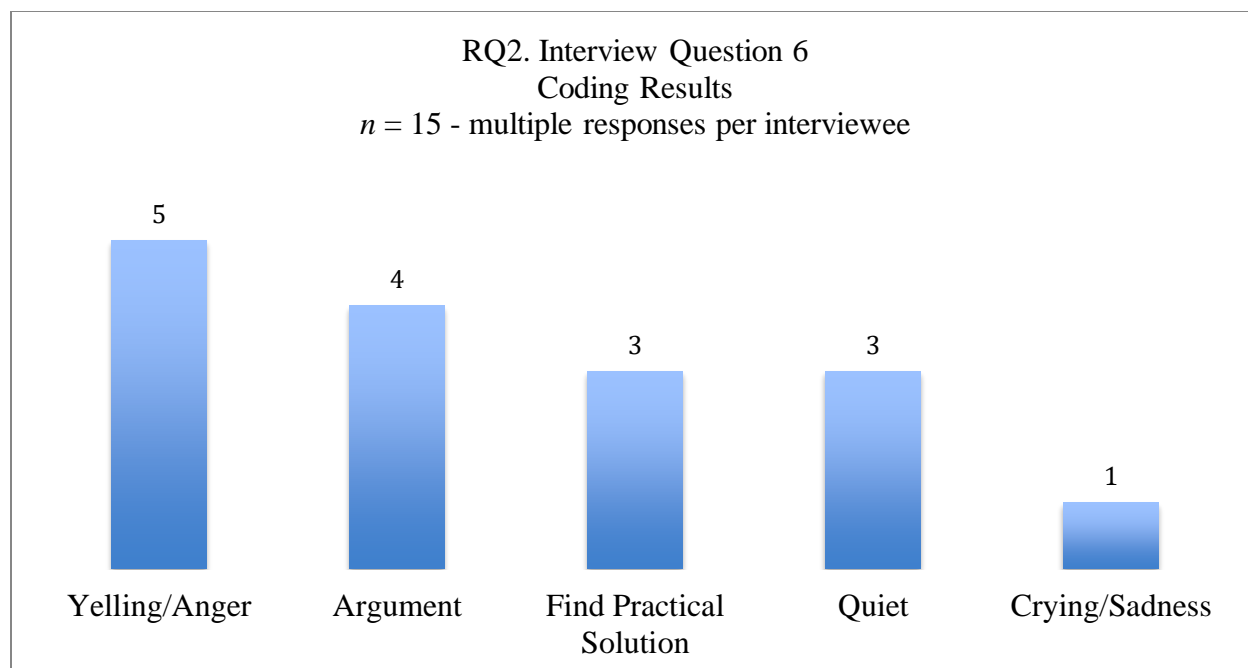
Figure 11. These are the most notable themes that emerged from women regarding the ways they express dissatisfaction with unmet needs. The figure demonstrates the fixed themes that emerged from responses to interview question 6. Data is presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Yelling/Anger. Blowing up and Yelling, Anger was another theme that surfaced for five

of the participants in this study. Participant #8 said, "I am dramatic and kind of loud, and I have

an over-the-top reaction. I see that this is a sign to look close." Participant #12 said, "I blow up.

I tend to hold it all in, and then I blow up. I tend to yell and scream, and the more he retreats, I

scream more."

Argument. Four women in this study identified the theme of arguing as a way to express

dissatisfaction with an unmet need. Participant #9 said "I am using logic and reason, but nothing

seems logical to him." Participant #12 said, "I get frustrated and express my frustrations."

Participant #13 said, "We wait too long to address something, and then it becomes an argument."

Find practical solutions. Find practical solution. Three women in the study reported this

as a method to express dissatisfaction with an unmet need. Participant #15 said "I just articulate

what I need. Usually, my husband understands and lets me do whatever I 'need' to do. We took care of my elderly uncle and now both of my parents, for instance."

Quiet. Interview question six identified the theme of being quiet when you are not satisfied in a relationship. Three people said that this is a theme for them. Some people just quietly retreat, rather than express themselves verbally. Participant #1 said "What's wrong? Nothing." Participant #14 said, "I just get quiet. I don't really speak up."

Crying/sadness. Interview question number six identified the theme of crying and sadness. One woman referred to this theme, but it was significant and profound. Crying is an indicator that needs are not being met, according to this interview participant. Participant #7 said, "Withdrawing somewhat, and then crying and being sad."

Summary of RQ2. Research Question 2 sought to identify "What challenges do married couples face in their effort to meet each other's needs?" A total of 20 themes were identified by analyzing key phrases, viewpoints, or responses to the six interview questions. The themes emerged as the following: (a) anger, (b) social media, (c) assumptions, (d) time constraints, (e) difficulty communicating needs, (f) all my needs are met, (g) finances, (h) feeling unappreciated, (i) ball-dropping, (j) family connection, (k) not doing their share, (l) feeling not heard, (m) feeling unappreciated, (n) job interference, (o) lack of attention, (p) crying/sadness, (q) quiet, (r) find practical solutions, (s) argument, (t) yelling/anger.

Research Question 3

The third research question (RQ3) asked, "How do married couples measure and track success in meeting each other's needs?" A total of six interview questions were asked of the participants in an effort to answer the first research question. The six questions related to RQ3 are: 1. What are the characteristics of a successful relationship to you?

2. What are the indicators of needs being met?

3. What are the indicators that the needs have not been met?

4. How do you feel when your needs are met?

5. What life scenarios assisted you in meeting each other's needs?

6. Can laughter be a gauge of needs being met? Explain how.

Interview question 1. The first interview question was "What are the characteristics of a successful relationship to you?" This was intended to answer the third research question in this dissertation study. Through the analysis of all responses to interview question 1, a total of five characteristics were identified. The themes emerged as the following: (a) financial stability-1 (7%), (b) physical attraction- 2 (13%), (c) honest 2-way communication-4 (27%), (d) humor and laughter-4 (27%), (e) joint purpose/balance-4 (27%) (see Figure 12).

RQ3. Interview Question 1
Coding Results
$n = 15$ - multiple responses per interviewee
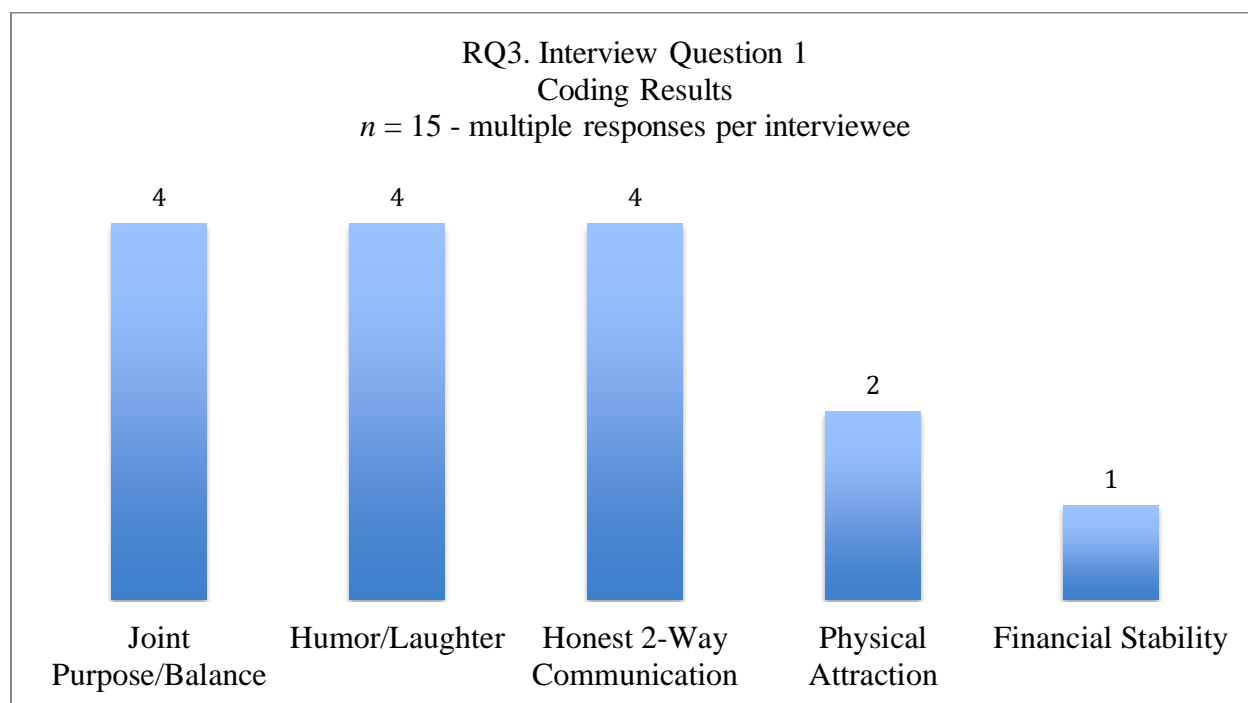
Figure 12. These are the most notable themes that emerged from women regarding the characteristics of a successful relationship. The figure demonstrates the fixed themes that emerged from responses to interview question 1. Data is presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Joint purpose and balance. Interviewees pointed out that joint purpose and balance are ways to measure success in a relationship. Four people said that this is the marking of a healthy relationship. Participant #13 stated, "You feel that you have purpose in your own life, and you're contributing to the world. Having a partner who is equal who balances you out. We have to take care of each other because no one else will. The animals are not going to take care of us. They may entertain those but that's about it."

Humor and laughter. Four women mentioned the theme of humor and laughing at themselves as a way to gauge success in a relationship. Participant #7 said, "We make each other laugh. This is someone I really, really like." Participant #12 "How content? How much joy and happiness are you experiencing? Do you feel supported? I am in back of you. We are there for each other." Participant #15 said, "We enjoy each other's company and do lots of fun and interesting things together—give parties, mostly centered around sharing good wines, socialize over meals with friends and family. We share similar viewpoints and talk about politics, religious beliefs, and the world in general. We discuss the future for our children and grandchildren. We travel together."

Honest 2-way communication. This interview question initiated the theme of honest 2-way communication and forgiveness as a characteristic for a successful relationship. Four women mentioned this theme. Participant #7 said "Both people can be relaxed and be themselves. You want to get to a point where you can relax and do self-care, also care about them too, but not have to try so hard." Participant #10 said, "Negotiate, compromise, laugh. Be best friends." Participant #13 said, "Understanding your own needs and then communicating it honestly seeking to understand before being understood."

Physical attraction. Two women in this study mentioned the characteristic of physical

attraction and chemistry. This physical chemistry is seen as a gauge for romantic success because you cannot be attracted to someone unless your needs are being met. Participant #2 said, "Physical attraction is one and sharing similar interests is another. You don't have to do the same things, but you should show an interest in the other person." Participant #7 said, "We find each other interesting."

Financial stability. Financial stability was mentioned by one person as a characteristic for a successful relationship. It is noted here as a distinguishing characteristic for a measure of success in partnerships that need stability. Participant #2 stated that, "It is important for both people to contribute. Participant #9 said "Financial stability is important to the relationship."

Interview question 2. The second interview question was "What are the indicators of needs being met?" This was intended to answer the third research question in this dissertation study. Through the analysis of all responses to interview question 2, a total of five indicators were identified. The themes emerged as the following: (a) interaction-2 (9%), (b) continuity/commitment- 3 (14%), (c) happiness- 5 (23%), (d)laughter- 5 (23%), (e) feeling loved and understood- 7 (32%) (see Figure 13).
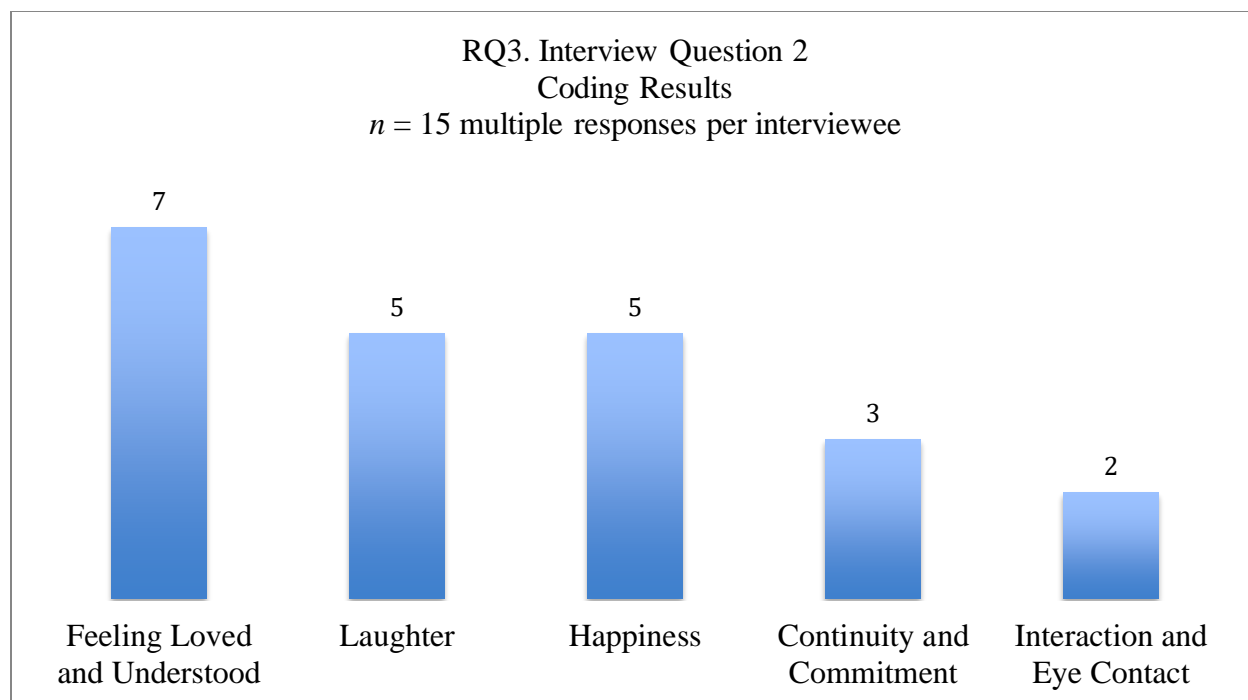
Figure 13. These are the most notable themes that emerged from women regarding the indicators for needs being met. The figure demonstrates the fixed themes that emerged from responses to interview question 2. Data is presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Feeling loved and understood. Seven participants described feeling loved and understood as an indicator that their needs are being met. Participant #10 said "Lack of fear for asking for what you need, and understanding that needs change." Participant #12 said, "I feel loved, unstoppable, more capable and have more power to higher degree."

Laughter. Laughter was a theme that surfaced with five of the interviewees. Participant #5 said, "You're happier together. Things are easy." Participant #9 said, "Laughter is an indicator of joy, health, and safety. Have freedom and interdependency."

Happiness. Five women described happiness as an indicator for needs being met in a romantic partnership. Participant #15 said, "We have fun and enjoy each other's company, We want to continue to have fun and be together. We are comfortable having each other around and enjoy it."

Continuity and commitment. Three women in this study mentioned continuity and commitment as themes that are indicators of needs being met. Participant #8 said "Do not get divorced. It's not an option."

Interaction and eye contact. Two women in this study referred to interaction and eye contact. Participant #13 said "Lots of laughter, hugging and eye contact."

Interview question 3. The third interview question was "What are the indicators that the needs have not been met?" This was intended to answer the third research question in this dissertation study. Through the analysis of all responses to interview question 3, a total of five indicators were identified. The themes emerged as the following: (a) nitpicking- 1 (7%), (b) sadness- 1 (7%), (c) loneliness- 3 (20%), (d) body language/no eye contact- 4 (27%), (e) stressed- 6 (40%) (see Figure 14).

RQ3. Interview Question 3
Coding Results
n = 15 - multiple responses per interviewee

6	4	3	1	1
Stressed	Body Language/No Eye Contact	Lonely	Sadness	Nitpicking
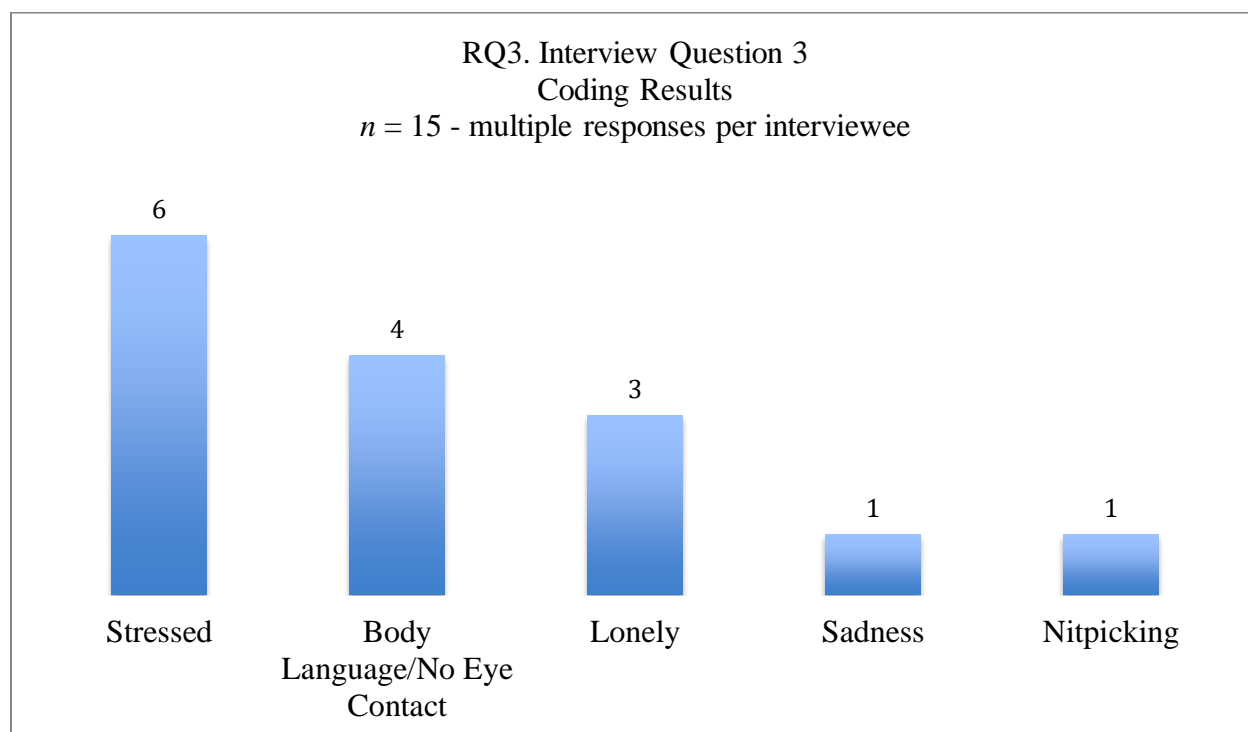
Figure 14. These are the most notable themes that emerged from women regarding the indicators for needs not being met. The figure demonstrates the fixed themes that emerged from responses to interview question 3. Data is presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Stressed. Interview question 3 indicated that women will feel stressed when their needs are not being met. This theme surfaced with six of the participants. Participant #8 said, "You're agitated, frustrated, distant from each other, silent treatment." Participant #9 said, "I feel stifled as if I want to do something professionally, and he doesn't want me or allow me to do that." Participant #10 said, "Stress, arguments, addictions, emotional affairs, OCD, eating disorders." Participant #15 said, "Bad mood, grouchy, short, need time alone to work out thoughts and feelings."

Body language/no eye contact. Interview question 3 indicated that body language, and more specifically no eye contact, was used to imply that needs were not being me. This came from four of the study participants.

Lonely. Interview question 3 indicated that loneliness is a result of needs not being met. This came from three participants. Participant #12 said "I feel a sense of separation. I feel like I am on my own instead of on a team." Participant #13 said "Empty." Participant #14 said "Do what you want to do, leave me alone."

Sadness. Interview question 3 indicated that sadness was a theme for needs not being met. One of the interviewees mentioned this theme.

Nitpicking. Interview question 3 indicated that nitpicking can surface when needs are not being met. A lot of men complain about their partners being too nitpicky, and this theme confirmed the notion that this is a symptom that some needs are not being met. One person in the study mentioned this theme. Participant #11 said "You fight about dumb little things that are not a big deal at the end of the day. You start nitpicking at things that are not important."

Interview question 4. The fourth interview question was "How do you feel when your needs are met?" This was intended to answer the third research question in this dissertation

study. Through the analysis of all responses to interview question 4, a total of five themes were identified. The themes emerged as the following: (a) loved- 1 (7%), (b) understood- 1 (7%), (c) safe,- 3(20%) (d) content- 4 (27%), (e) happy- 6 (40%) (see Figure 15).
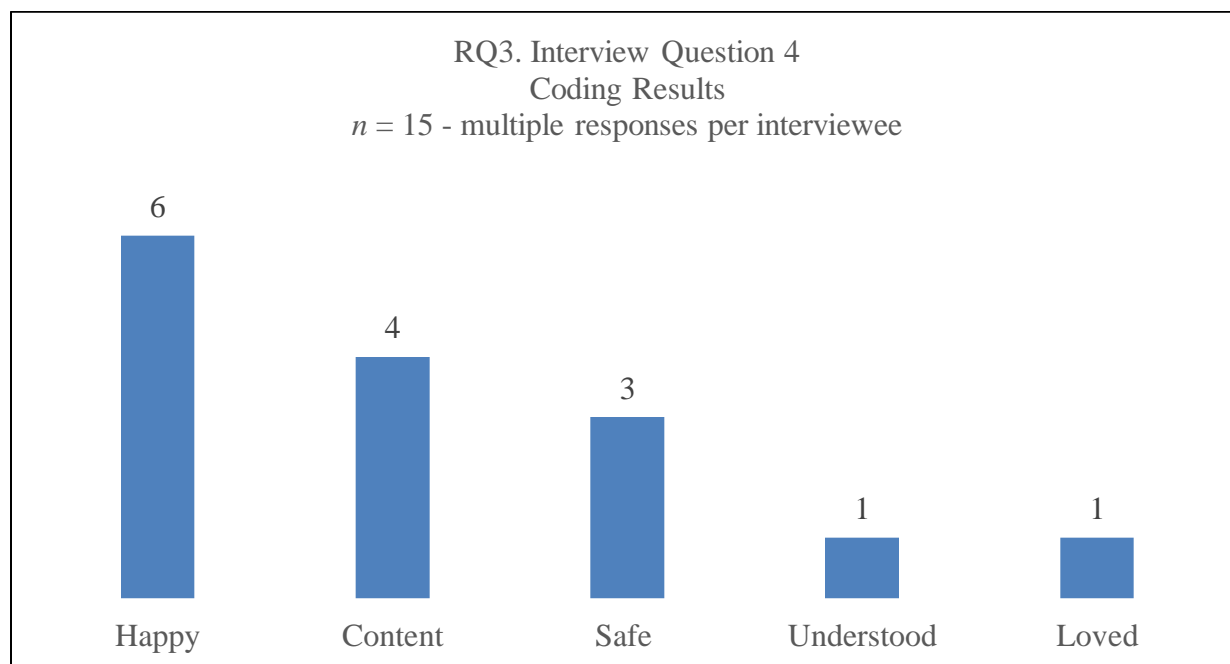
Figure 15. These are the most notable themes that emerged from women regarding how women feel when needs are being met. The figure demonstrates the fixed themes that emerged from responses to interview question 4. Data is presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Happy. Interview question 4 indicated that women feel happy when their needs are being met. Six of the interview participants mentioned this as a theme. Participant #4 said, "What attracted me to my husband is that he was able to defuse the situation with humor. I would get all riled up, and he would just crack a joke and get myself out of the moment. I appreciate that quality in him that he could, for the lack of a better term, defuse me. Participant #9 said, "Happy, understood. He gets me, and he's growing alongside me. He's not afraid of my growth. I am not afraid of his." Participant #15 said, "I am pretty happy, joyful (naturally) and feel very blessed to have my life. I thank God daily for my life and my husband."

Content. Interview question 4 indicated that women feel content when their needs are

being met. This was stated by four of the interviewees.

 Safe. Interview question 4 indicated that women feel safe when their needs are being met. This was stated by three of the study participants.

 Understood. Interview question 4 indicated that women feel understood when their needs are being met. This was stated by one of the interviewees.

 Loved. Interview question 4 indicated that women feel loved when their needs are being met. This was mentioned by one of the interviewees. Participant #8 said "I feel content; I feel loved. I feel lucky that I have found a partner who knows how to meet my needs. It makes me feel loved."

 Interview question 5. The fifth interview question was "What life scenarios assisted you in meeting each other's needs?" This was intended to answer the third research question in this dissertation study. Through the analysis of all responses to interview question 5, a total of five scenarios were identified. The themes emerged as the following: (a) illness-1 (8%), (b) challenges/crisis- 2 (15%), (c) major life events- 2 (15%), (d) holidays-4 (31%), (e) vacations- 4 (31%) (see Figure 16).
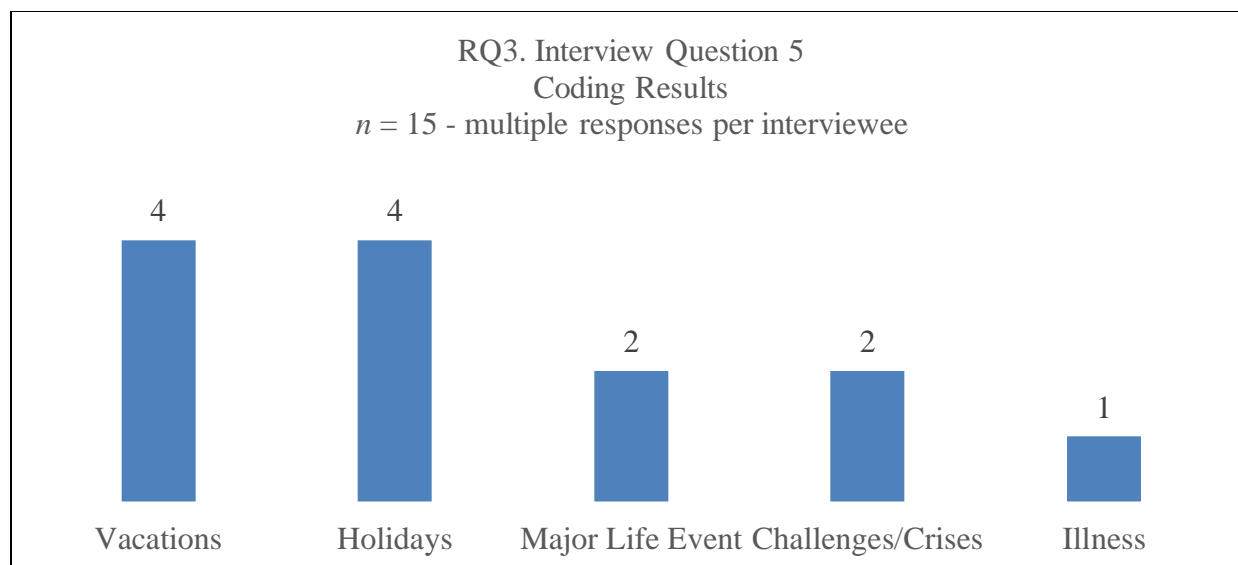
Figure 16. These are the most notable themes that emerged from women regarding life scenarios that assisted in meeting each others needs. The figure demonstrates the fixed themes that emerged from responses to interview question 5. Data is presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Vacations. Interview question 5 indicated that vacations are a scenario that assisted with meeting each other's needs. Four of the interview participants mentions this theme. Participant #9 said, "We love going to the beach together. There's a lot of laughter when we go to the beach. I laugh more than he does. We match each other intellectually. People have total control of how to create happiness and laughter, but it is like an island. You have to get to it. Go to beach, go together or with friends, to where laughter can happen." Participant #14 said, "We would go to the same camping place every year for over 10 years. We have a lot of mutual interests. We would go back into nature."

Holidays. Interview question 5 indicated that holidays are a scenario that assisted with meeting each other's needs. Four of the interview participants mentions this theme. Participant #15 said, "I am the CFO- Chief Fun Officer." Participant #1 said, "We're laughing when things are going well. At Christmas, we were hosting dinner, and a day before my husband was supposed to pick up the honey baked ham and the turkey. It was for his family, and there were

nine guests. He goes to the store and picked up the wrong stuff: a small half of the ham, and he got the wrong sliced turkey. I told him to go back and get more stuff, so he gets two turkeys and two honey-baked hams, so I said now we're going to feed the whole building. The next day we were laughing. I said, we almost didn't have food for everyone. He tried to take the sliced turkey back, but you cannot take food back to the store, so he gave it to a homeless guy with a dog. I said, OK then you're forgiven."

Major life event. Interview question 5 indicated that major life events are a scenario that assisted with meeting each other's needs. Two of the interviewees mentioned this as theme. Participant #2 stated, "My boss was not happy because he was going through a divorce. Now he's with somebody that gets him, and he's so much happier. When your needs are met, and you are content in your life, it is easier to laugh at things."

Participant #4 said, "November and December we were out of our home because of the Woolsey fire. We were evacuated for two months. We moved around quite a bit. We went probably to 12 different hotels in two different states. We kind of moved around because we were trying to make sure that the kids were not negatively affected and had questions about what's going on because their friends' houses burned down. There was so much going on emotionally. We were trying to create variety because what was missing is the safety and security of their home. So, we decided to move around more. It created more stability for our children than just being in one other place. We were making sure that basic needs were met. Everything was different: different workers, different places to live. Everything was different, but we laughed a lot with five and eight-year-olds trying to make sense of it all. Their friends lost their homes, so we would make play dates so they can play and laugh and just enjoy the simple

things. Because the basic needs were met, camaraderie and friendship for the kids and for us was really important."

Challenges/Crises. Interview question 5 indicated that challenges and crises are a scenario that assisted with meeting each other's needs. Two people shared stories of challenging situations that helped them meet each other's needs. Participant #4 stated, "Sometimes you just have to laugh. It was a situation when I bought a condo home, and I was moving. We were planning a wedding ,and I think it was like the straw that broke the camel's back. He scratched the picture that was important to me. At that time, I was really sad about that. I just sat down and started crying. 'You scratched my picture.' But now, we joke about it all the time. We can laugh about it." Participant #7 said, "We look to each other for that family connection" after explaining how a move impacted their lives. One of the participants was at the World Trade Center on 9/11 and pregnant with their daughter. Obviously, she was one of the survivors in that horror story but turned the stress into joy that she was safe and the connection to her husband and family made every moment a lot more cherished. Another participant talked about losing their home in the fires and how it united their family and they were traveling with the kids to make sure that they were not traumatized. They organized gatherings with other families that lost their homes and noticed laughter effortlessly created. In all of these scenarios, there was a lot of laughter that came out of each person stepping up and meeting each other's needs.

Illness. Interview question 5 indicated that illnesses are a scenario that assisted with meeting each others needs. The interview question that asked about the life scenarios that created more happiness and meeting each other's needs, stories surfaced that were surprisingly revealing stressful situations that brought couples together closer. One interviewee shared the story about having chemotherapy and how her introverted husband was so caring and loving and

it brought a lot of joy and laughter because he was meeting her needs of reading to her, holding her, encouraging her. Other situations that were brought up included tense situations such as when a husband did not bring home enough turkey on a Thanksgiving holiday, which created stress until he brought home enough turkey to feed the entire neighborhood. That instigated a lot of laughter.

Interview question 6. The sixth interview question was "Can laughter be a gauge of needs being met?" This was intended to answer the third research question in this dissertation study. Through the analysis of all responses to interview question 6, a total of three themes were identified. The themes emerged as the following: (a) make fun of ourselves- 1 (6%), (b) all needs met- 1 (6%), (c) absolutely- 15 (88%) (see Figure 17).
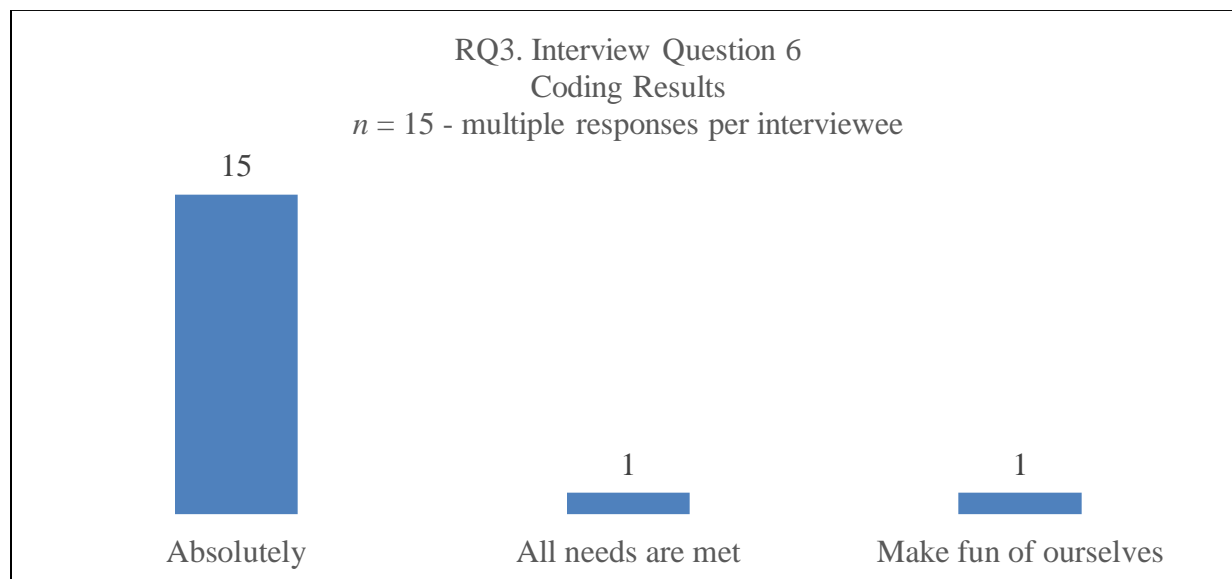
Figure 17. These are the most notable themes that emerged from women regarding laughter as a gauge for needs being met. The figure demonstrates the fixed themes that emerged from responses to interview question 6. Data is presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Absolutely. Interview question 6 indicated that "absolutely, laughter is the gauge of needs being met". All 15 interviewees agreed to this theme. Participant # 6 said: "Yes! Absolutely! It would good if people could be made aware, to use that as a marker. Ask yourself

did I laugh today? Who did I laugh with? Who made me laugh? If you can't laugh at yourself, you might as well give up." Participant #7 said "Just the fact that he can make me laugh without even trying, that is a huge part of my attraction to him." Participant #8 said "Laughter is a realization that we are connecting and understanding each other and that we can be our most inappropriate self together." Participant #9 said, "Yes for sure. When you are laughing, you are releasing something like anger or frustration. It's like sneezing. Your body is trying to get rid of some foreign object. When you're laughing, you're experiencing joy, when you're crying, you're experiencing sadness. Laughter is associated with joy. Joy is associated with contentment. Contentment is associated with needs being met."

Participant #10 said "Laughter is a spiritual experience. It is a connection to something higher, whatever that is to you. If you can see some sort of higher power, and it's playfully playing in the world with us, sometimes humor is one of the most helpful and healing things to do when they are in pain. It's a spiritual experience, it's a deeper soul thing." Participant #12 said, "It makes him happy to see me happy. We even laugh when things don't go right. I am normally more serious, but it has been good for me to laugh." Participant #14 said, "…then you know you are relaxed." Participant #15 said "Absolutely. It is key to keeping together and keeping the spark or butterflies in the stomach. I do believe when there's laughter in the relationship that means that you're still open, and you are still willing to communicate, and you're still willing to laugh and make fun of yourself and this situation. And it's not all the lost cause when you still have levity to take a joke or laugh with yourself. That means you're still in the good part of the relationship."

All needs are met. Interview question 6 indicated that all needs are met at moments of laughter. This was stated by one of the study participants who felt that laughter was an indicator

of ALL needs being met, not just some of them.

  Make fun of ourselves. Interview question 6 indicated a theme that people use as a gauge for needs being met. One woman in particular shared that laughter is often a gauge of needs being met, which she found when "we make fun of ourselves." Participant #15 explained the fun they had teasing each other for the little mistakes they often make.

  Summary of RQ3. Research Question 3 sought to identify how married couples measure and track success in meeting each other's needs. A total of 20 themes were identified by analyzing key phrases, viewpoints, or responses to the three interview questions. The theme of laughter was identified in both interview questions two and three, and the themes loved and understood were both identified in questions three and four. Happy and happiness were also mentioned in questions three and four. Therefore, listed below, and only applying the themes once, the 19 themes were: (a) financial stability, (b) physical attraction, (c) honest 2-way communication, (d) humor, (e) joint purpose/balance, (f) interaction, (g) continuity/commitment, (h) happiness, (i)laughter, (j) nitpicking, (k) sadness, (l) loneliness, (m) body language/no eye contact, (n) stressed, (o) loved, (p) understood, (q) safe, (r) content, (s) happy.

Research Question 4

  The fourth research question (RQ4) asked, "What is the most important thing that you learned on how to meet your partner's needs?" This research question was used to create a roadmap for future couples who want to know the ingredients that make for a successful relationships. The women who were interviewed identified strategies and practical advice that can be passed down to future generations of women who want to thrive in love. A total of four interview questions were asked to the participants in an effort to answer the fourth research questions. The four questions related to RQ4 are:

1.   What is the most important thing that you learned on how to meet your partner's needs?

2.   What would you tell a couple who just got married about meeting each other's needs?

3.   How would you describe to future married couples the importance of meeting each other's needs?

4.   Can laughter be one of the benefits of meeting each other's needs?

For this section of the analysis, questions two and three were combined because their answers were so similar. They will be integrated into one section for the purpose of understanding advice for future couples regarding needs being met.

Interview question 1. The first interview question was "What is the most important thing that you learned on how to meet your partner's needs?" This was intended to answer the fourth research question in this dissertation study. Through the analysis of all responses to interview question 1, a total of three lessons learned were identified. The themes emerged as the following: (a) space/making time- 2 (11%), (b) trust/making joint decisions- 2 (11%), (c) listening/giving attention- 4 (21%, (d) date night- 4 (21%), (e) communication- 7 (37%) (see Figure 18).
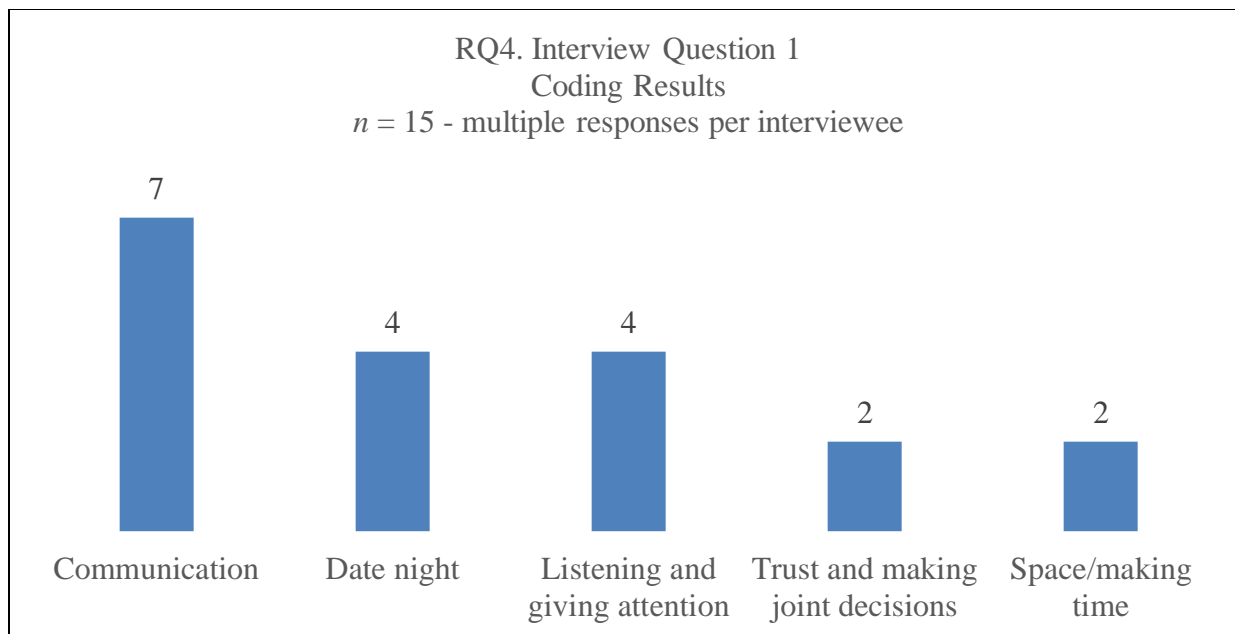
Figure 18. These are the most notable themes that emerged from women regarding the most important thing learned for how to meet a partner's needs. The figure demonstrates the fixed themes that emerged from responses to interview question 1. Data is presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Communication. Interview question 1 indicated that communication was an important

way to meet a partner's needs. This was mentioned by seven of the interviewees. Participant #7

said, "Learn when is a good time to approach your partner. Sit down and talk with them when

you think they are ready to talk, don't try to play games." Participant #8 said, "Set up an

agreement to communicate with each other. It becomes a commitment that you are going to

pursue relentlessly." Participant #9 said, "Laughter is validation. It means you get it."

Participant #11 stated, "I was just having a conversation with somebody who is a newlywed.

She's already experiencing problems. I said to her you need to be able to communicate. It sounds

like a cliché thing. Communication is so important when someone hears and listens to you. You

need to communicate to each other what your specific needs are. I felt like in her case, she was

squashing a part of herself just so she can get along. I said trust me when I tell you, when you

guys want kids it's all going to lump onto you even more. If you're really feeling resentful before children, and he's not holding up his end of the bargain, you have to sit them down and be real."

Date night. Interview question 1 indicated that date night was an important part of romantic relationships. Four women shared that this has become a priority to them. Participant #2 said, "You have to have a date night. We were both in school together. We were working full time, and the date night might just happen in the library with the takeout. You need to make time to spend with each other. Making that extra time to talk our way is to go out to dinner, have some wine talk, and laugh about stuff." Participant #12 said, "Stay connected in little ways and big ways. Like holding hands. You can read each other better when there is intimacy. You have to keep the relationship a priority. You get to know them better, and you read the verbal and nonverbal cues, but it takes time."

Listening and giving attention. Interview question 1 indicated that listening and giving attention were important lessons learned. In fact, four of the interview participants talked about this theme. Participant #3 said, "Being able to listen, watch body language, and sense more that they might say. Pay attention to how they are acting and how they are breathing. When I am sensing that he is uptight, 'I will ask what's wrong?'" Participant #13 said, "Pay attention to the signals and address them right away. Put your own needs aside and meet his needs first. Don't wait, take action." Participant #14 said, "Giving more than taking."

Trusting and making joint decisions. Interview question 1 indicated that trust is important in a relationship. Two of the interview participants shared this theme which included joint decisions which cannot happen if there is no trust. Participants #1 and 2 said, "In order to have laughter, you have to trust that the person is not going to get offended if you say something that maybe isn't funny to them. It may trigger something you didn't even know about."

Space/Making time. Interview question 1 indicated that space and making time for each other is an important lesson learned. Two of the interview participants described this theme. Participant #10 said, "Be in the moment, be grateful, appreciate each other. Explore the threats that stop you from letting things go. You can't count on tomorrow or the next hour, keep the memory and try to make it a good one." Participant #15 said, "Sometimes I need to give him space. Leave him alone. Just to be aware of that is important. Sometimes we think it's all about us but recognizing that we need to have an effect on the other person is also important."

Interview question 2/3. The second interview question was "What would you tell a couple who just got married about meeting each other's needs?" For this section, it is combined with the third interview question which was "How would you describe to future married couples the importance of meeting each other's needs?" These two questions were combined because the answers were so intertwined. Because of the overlap, the researcher adjusted to make the findings more easy to interpret. This was intended to answer the fourth research question in this dissertation study. Through the analysis of all responses to interview question 2 and 3, a total of three themes were identified. The themes emerged as the following: (a) paramount-1 (7%) (b) self-care- 1 (7%), (c) vital- 2 (14%), (d) very important- 10 (71%) (see Figure 19).

RQ4. Interview Questions 2/3
Coding Results
$n = 15$ - multiple responses per interviewee

10

2

1

1

Very important   Vital   Self-care   Paramount
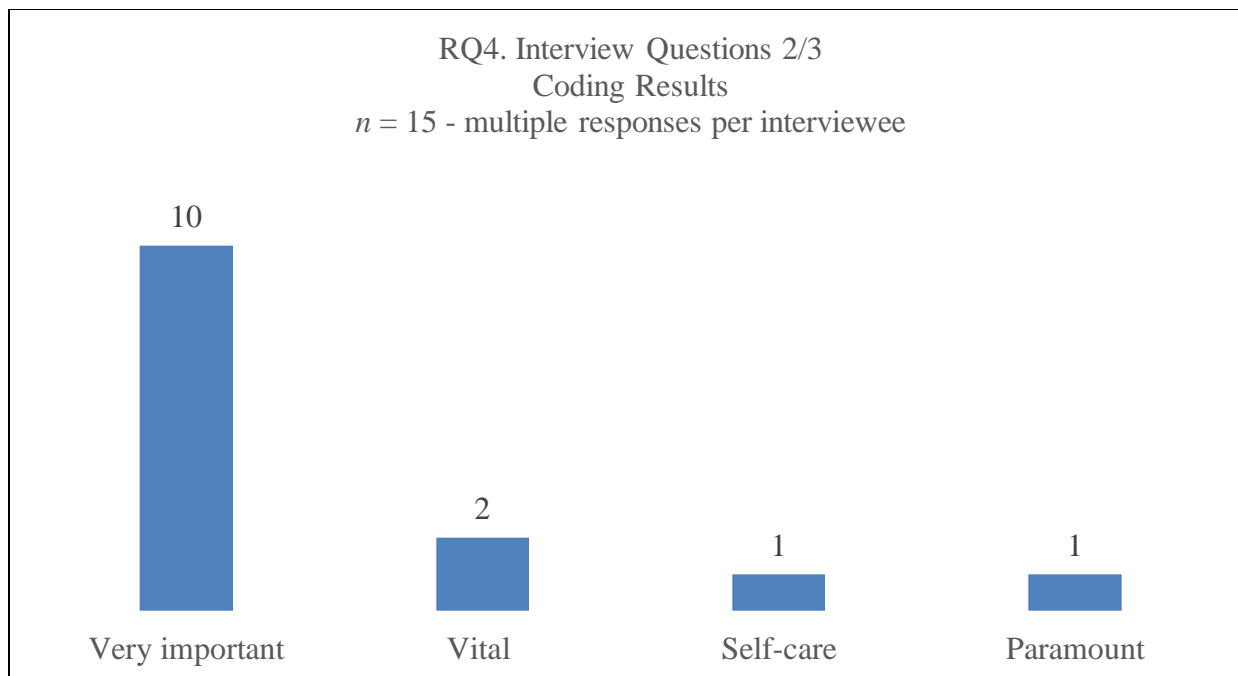
Figure 19. These are the most notable themes that emerged from women regarding the importance of meeting a partner's needs. The figure demonstrates the fixed themes that emerged from responses to interview questions 2 and 3. Data is presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Very important. Interview questions 2 and 3 indicated that it is important to meet each other's needs in a romantic partnership. This was stated by 10 of the interviewees. Participant #6 said, "One of the biggest things is not to take each other for granted, and really work on the two of you. When the two of you are good, everything falls into place. Don't get caught up when life happens. In the end of the day, you have to be each other's top priority." Participant #12 stated, "Make it a priority and build in the time." Participant #13 said "You have to always try. It doesn't always work out because life gets in the way, but you have to try."

Vital. Interview questions 2 and 3 indicated that it is vital to meet each other's needs. This was stated by two of the interview participants. Participant #7 said "You need to make it a new learned habit to check in on someone and make sure they know you care about them. This builds trust and safety." "The meeting each other's needs is vital if you want your relationship to survive. If it's one-sided, eventually that person is going to get frustrated. They are going to feel

taken for granted. And the other person will move further away never thinking it's all about them and never meeting the other person's needs. Eventually you will grow apart. That's when I see frustrations grow. Several of my friends are going through divorces, and I never thought it would happen to them.They grow apart. They didn't spend much time together." Without healthy vital signs, your body will not work properly. Meeting each other's needs was described as "vital" which implied "necessary to the continuation of life" and in this case the life of the relationship.

Self-care. Interview questions 2 and 3 indicated that self-care is an important way to meet each other's needs. This was referenced by one person in the study. She was saying that if you don't take of yourself then you won't be able to take care of the other person. So self-care is the best way to meet the other person's needs as well.

Paramount. Interview questions 2 and 3 indicated that it is paramount to meet a partner's needs in a relationship. This was stated by one person in this way. Participant #9 said "It's everything. If you are not meeting each other's needs, what's the point of being married. If your needs are not met by a friend, family member, or coworker, there is no reason to be in that relationship. I had a coworker that I really didn't care for. He was very unpleasant, and he did not meet my professional needs. Therefore, no matter of how humorous he would be, I could not laugh." Paramount is defined as being of the highest important. This means that it becomes a top priority.

Interview question 4. The fourth interview question was "Can laughter be one of the benefits of meeting each other's needs?" Through the analysis of all responses to interview question 4, a total of three themes were identified. The themes emerged as the following: (a) not for me,- 1 (6%) (b) some people never learn to laugh- 1 (6%), (c) absolutely- 15 (88%) (see Figure 20).

RQ4. Interview Question 4
Coding Results
$n = 15$ - multiple responses per interviewee
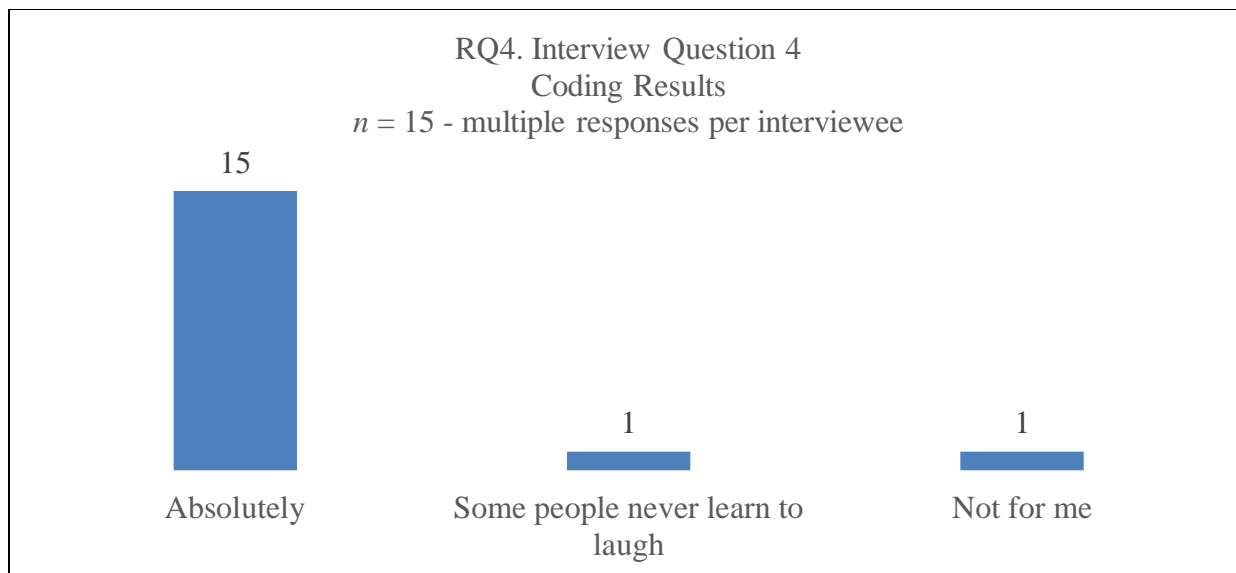
Figure 20. These are the most notable themes that emerged from women regarding laughter as a benefit of meeting each other's needs. The figure demonstrates the fixed themes that emerged from responses to interview question 4. Data is presented in decreasing order of frequency. The numbers in each theme indicate the number of times a direct or indirect statement was made by an interview participant that fell into the respective theme category.

Absolutely. Interview question 4 indicated that an overwhelming majority of the participants could find laughter beneficial for needs being met. All 15 participants agreed with this theme in some form. Participant #7 said, "It's the best thing to laugh. It is just to be able to laugh with someone that you care about." Participant #8 said "it puts your body and physiology in a better place. It helps you relax. If you can laugh at something, like a comedy show, if you are both laughing it brings you closer together and you feel like you are similar to the other person. You need to go with the flow. Laugh. Life is funny and weird and crazy all by itself." Participant #10: Laughter provides hope. It provides breakthroughs." Participant #15 shared that "Laughter is healing. Laughter is fun. Laugher invites delighting in each other. Laughter keeps the relationship strong, yet fun." Participant #13 explained "I don't know any other way to enjoy each other but to laugh together." Participant #14 agreed, "When there's a tense situation, that is what makes it light again."

Some people never learn to laugh. Interview question 4 indicated that some people never

learn to laugh. This came from one of the participants in the study so it was an outlier. She

stated that laughter can be a gauge but some people never learn to laugh.

    Not for me. Interview question 4 indicated that laughter might be a benefit for some

people, but not for everyone. This theme emerged from one person out of the study so it was an

outlier. Although one person said "absolutely, laughter is an indication of needs being met",

they clarified that "laughter is just not for me."

    Summary of RQ4. Research Question 3 sought to identify what is the most important

thing that women learned on how to meet a partner's needs. A total of 12 themes were identified

by analyzing key phrases, viewpoints, or responses to the three interview questions.   Listed

below, the 12 themes were: (a) space/making time, (b) trust/making joint decisions, (c)

listening/giving attention, (d) date night, (e) communication, (f) paramount (g) self-care, (h)

vital, (i) very important, (j) not for me, (k) some people never learn to laugh, (l) absolutely.

    Data collected for this study proved to be invaluable in the quest for understanding the

formula for happiness in romantic relationships. As participant #9 stated, partners should:

> Be each other's best friend. Be each other's best cheerleader. Be supportive of
>
> each other, but have separate interests, hobbies, etc. Be willing to do or try what
>
> the other spouse wants to do. If one or the other does not like the activity, then
>
> respect that. Love each other unconditionally. Have mutual love and respect.

These are pieces of advice for people in relationships that want to increase the chances of

sustainability and health. The formula for creating long lasting laughter in a relationship needs to

be brought to a conscious level. From this data collection, it is clear that needs must be met and

humor must be used in order to create laughter in a relationship. Together those ingredients will

lead to a honeymoon that lasts an entire lifetime.

Chapter 4 Summary

There is a well-known saying by comedian Victor Borge, "Laughter is the closest distance between two people." The interviewees in this research study agreed with that sentiment. Several subjects described the spiritual and psychological benefits of laughter (and humor) as healing and good for the body, mind, and spirit. The results of the interview questions, which led to the summary of themes for each research question revealed that employment status, length of marriage, age, and level of education, were not obvious predictors of the spouses to be able to identify the needs of their partners.

For Research Question (RQ) 1, what strategies and practices do married couples use to meet each other's needs, the most common responses for each interview question (IQ) that substantiated RQ1 were categorized as the following themes: IQ1 communication - answered by 10 participants, IQ2 asking - answered by 6 participants, IQ3 auditory - answered by 12 participants, IQ4 withdrawn and preoccupied behavior - each answered by 6 participants, IQ5 internalize and quiet/walk clues - each answered by 5 participants, and IQ6 lack of physical affection - answered by 4 participants. It was observed through the responses of IQ4 - *Can you identify your partner's needs observing their behavior, and what does it tell you* & IQ5 - *What specific clues help you identify your partner's needs*, that the responses were only identifying negative behavior. Positive behavior was not noticed nor mentioned.

For Research Question (RQ) 2, what challenges do married couples face in their effort to meet each other's needs, the most common theme for IQ 1, 2, and 3 was difficulty communicating needs. For IQ4, the most common response was lack of support in a family connection. There were three common themes for IQ5: feeling unappreciated, job interference,

and lack of attention. IQ6 identified yelling/anger as the most common theme for expressing

dissatisfaction of unmet needs.

For Research Question (RQ) 3, how do married couples measure and track success in

meeting each other's needs, the three most identified themes given by the participants for IQ1

were honest two-way communication, humor/laughter, and joint purpose/balance. For IQ2,

feeling loved and understood was the most identified themes by the participants. IQ3 revealed

that stress was the main indicator of needs not being met. When needs are being met by the

spouse, IQ4's main theme was feeling happy. Holidays and vacations were the most identified

life scenarios that assisted in meeting each other's needs for IQ5. When the question of whether

laughter can be a gauge of needs being met, the response was a unanimous "absolutely" for IQ6.

For Research Question (RQ) 4, what recommendations would married couples give to

future married couples in meeting each other's needs, the most common themes for IQ1 was

communication. The themes for IQ2 and IQ3 were combined to show that in a romantic

relationship, it is very important to meet each other's needs. Once again, when laughter in a

relationship was discussed, the response was unanimous when all participants stated in IQ4 that

laughter is absolutely a benefit to meeting each other's needs.

Within each interview question, there were comments made by only one or two

participants. These comments are considered outliers of the study. The outliers may not be seen

as themes, but they are important findings within the study that the participants felt were

necessary to mention and include in their interview. The multiple themes and outliers create a

comprehensive list of how these participants view their current relationships and show that, even

though the demographics may be different and outliers exist, there are many commonalities

when the participants agree upon strategies, challenges, successes, and recommendations for meeting each other's needs.

Table 3

Summary of Themes for Four Research Questions

RQ1.	RQ2.	RQ3.	RQ4.
Texting	Anger	Financial Stability	Space/Making Time
Asking Directly	Social Media	Physical Attraction	Trust/Making Joint Decisions
Anticipation	Assumptions	Honest 2-Way Communication	Listening/Giving Attention
Observation	Time Constraints	Humor	Date Night
Communication	Difficulty Communicating Needs	Joint Purpose/Balance	Communication
Trust	All Needs Met	Interaction	Paramount
Listening	Finances	Continuity/Commitment	Self-Care
Verbal	Feeling Unappreciated	Happiness	Vital
Paying Attention	Ball-dropping	Laughter	Very Important
Asking Clarifying Questions	Family Connection	Nitpicking	Not For Me
All of Them	Not Doing Share	Sadness	Never Learn To laugh
Kinesthetic	Feeling Not Heard	Loneliness	Absolutely
Visual	Feeling Unappreciated	Body Language	
Auditory	Job Interference	Stressed	
Anger	Lack of Attention	Loved	
Checked-out	Crying/Sadness	Understood	
Body Language	Quiet	Safe	

(continued)

RQ1.	RQ2.	RQ3.	RQ4.
Withdrawn	Find Practical Solutions	Content	
Preoccupied	Argument	Happy	
Irritated	Yelling/Anger		
Internalize			
Quiet/Walk			
Sexually Deprived			
House Chores			
Lack of "Me" Time			
Impatient/Lack of Interest			
Physical Affection			

Note. This table demonstrates a summary of all the themes derived through the data analysis process.

Chapter 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction to the Study

The researcher's desire was for this phenomenological qualitative study to prove or disprove the following formula: needs being met + shared sense of humor = laughter. The goal was also to make people aware that the formula can be reversed, meaning that when you hear laughter, whether it's between friends, partners, lovers, or even strangers, you recognize that a shared sense of humor is present and needs are being met.

This study is a very important part of the researcher's quest to understand the correlation between happiness and laughter. Can laughter be a gauge for the health of a relationship? Like a gas gauge in a car lets a driver know how much fuel is left in the tank, laughter can be a gauge that lets someone know how much happiness is in the relationship. This researcher questions whether or not there could be a Law of Laughter and what condition needs to be present for it to reveal itself. From the beginning of time, people tried to create fire on demand and had no recipe for that.   This was until someone realized that when there is oxygen there are only two elements that need to be present: fuel and spark. This ended humanity's quest for fire. It became a dependable commodity that changed the way the world lives.

In a similar analogy, humans have enjoyed laughter from the beginning of time. Proverbs 17:22 in the Bible says that "Laughter is the best medicine." In many relationships, human beings have been *fighting wars* or experiencing negative consequences triggered due by the lack of laughter. In today's world people who can create laughter on demand get paid millions of dollars to produce sitcoms, late night shows, comedy movies etc. What people overlook is that laughter happens effortlessly when we are spending time with our best friend and there is abundance of laughter that happens spontaneously in the honeymoon stage of our romantic

relationships (Harley, 2016). We just need to make conscious what ingredients are present in these scenarios? The goal of this study is to help people see that there is no God of laughter, but there is a Law Of Laughter (LOL).

We all want laughter. No one is against it. The benefit of being a professional comedian for over half a century, is the knowledge that in order to create laughter there needs to be *fuel* which will be explored in this study and *spark* which is an individual's sense of humor. Sense of humor is in the DNA of a person, it does not change from the day they are born until the day they die (Fry, 1994). So, wit is the mysterious ingredient that is easily overlooked that makes laughter a predictable commodity? By the observations of millions of people, through the laboratory setting of the researcher's theatre in Branson, Missouri with over 4.5 million people no one has ever agreed that they would go on a second date if they didn't have laughter in the first date. This confirms the hypothesis that the first date is when people unconsciously use laughter as a gauge of two things: whether their sense of humor is compatible and whether they can meet each other's needs (Harley, 2016). This phenomenon is what this particular research is about. It is often the overlooked ingredient, the capacity of understanding and desire to meet each other's needs.

This researcher is trying to help create more laughter in the world. By dissecting laughter, can help to identify what makes it happen. A questionnaire was designed to ask highly successful, intelligent women questions about what creates laughter in their romantic relationships. The goal was to prove or disprove a formula for the law of laughter as stated in chapter one of this study.   This study started out with four research questions that would help guide the exploration to prove or disprove this formula.

Research Questions

The following research questions (RQ) were addressed in this study.

- *RQ1* – What strategies and practices do married couples use to meet each other's needs?

- *RQ2* – What challenges do married couples face in their effort to meet each other's needs?

- *RQ3* – How do married couples measure and track success in meeting each other's needs?

- *RQ4* – What recommendations would married couples give to future married couples in meeting each other's needs?

Discussion of Findings

From this study's inductive analysis, themes emerged from participant responses. During the coding process, a master list was kept of all the commonalities, codes, and potential themes discovered during the coding process. The results of the coding helped to answer the research questions. The researcher utilized the coding process to create categories within the inductive analysis process. The labeling, description, text, links, and associated models helped to connect the categories to the research questions. After the initial coding, to establish interpreter reliability, a co-reviewer process was employed using two external co-reviewers individually to assess the researcher's coding. Upon completion of the co-reviewers' assessment, a discussion was held between the researcher and the reviewers, and clarifications and revisions were made. The results of the coding were translated into themes, correlated with the research questions, and presented in chapter four.

Results for RQ1. *RQ1* – What strategies and practices do married couples use to meet each other's needs? Through the process of interviewing 15 successful, intelligent, educated

women, the themes of several strategies and practices for married couples to meet each other's needs were observed. Communication and observation of body language of behavior was prominently referenced. The couples who have been together for longer periods of time, relied more on anticipating the needs of their partners. The couples who have been married for a shorter time were using verbal communication and skills of listening to ensure that they were accurate in understanding their partner's needs. Most couples used auditory communication to understand the desires of their spouses.

When the interviewees were asked about specific clues that gave them the knowledge about how their partner felt at that moment, most of the clues that they were looking for were the negative observations of their partners being preoccupied, withdrawn, irritated, and/or quiet. These negative observations and feelings give an indication that people are trained to be in a survival mode, and in a relationship, it is necessary to be more observant for clues related to your partner's safety needs as seen in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943). According to the literature regarding negative observations and emotions in relationships, relationship need fulfillment was conceptualized as analogous to the outcome of goal completion within relationships, and fulfillment of needs was hypothesized to predict emotional experience (Le & Agnew, 2001). Thinking positively about your partner. Having positive thoughts about your partner means that you focus on the good, not the bad… (Krauss Whitbourne, 2012).

Fulfillment of relationship needs was found to correlate with emotional experience. Participants in relationships characterized by an inequality of dependence experienced more negative emotion (and less positive emotion) in their relationship than did participants in mutually dependent partnerships. According to the literature, family support, traditional values, and life satisfaction had significant positive correlations with the satisfaction of all five needs,

and the anxiety/worry facet of neuroticism had significant negative correlations with the satisfaction of all the needs (Maslow,1943; Taormina & Gao, 2013).

In the discussion about their personal needs not being met and the scenarios that created that, the answers were very individual for each couple, but they all had to do with whether a specific need was not met. These included physical affection, house chores being ignored or delayed, lack of emotional intimacy, sexual deprivation, and lack of patience in partner's desire to understand the needs of the interviewee. According to the literature, when they walk into a room, you can feel the depression or despondency. On the other hand, when a person who tends to be appreciative, hopeful, and confident about the future or the success of something, walks into the room, you feel your spirit or confidence raised by their presence. (Harley, 2016).

Discussion of RQ1. Based on the data that was collected for RQ1, this researcher would recommend the following strategies and practices for meeting each other's needs. Couples should seek to understand their own needs and communicate them honestly, clearly and with kindness. People should also pay attention to subtle, unspoken needs, recognizing that anticipation of needs that partner has and being ahead of the game can create a healthier and much more satisfying relationships full of love and laughter.

Results for RQ2. *RQ2 –* What challenges do married couples face in their effort to meet each other's needs? The overwhelming majority of interviewees were pointing out that challenges of daily life and schedules dominate people's lives. Social media was also pointed out to be one of the distracting factors. According to the literature, romantic love lasts only a year. Italian researchers have found that the biochemical in the brain which makes falling in love feeling disappear in about a year Nerve Growth Factor - NGF (Emanuele et al., 2006). Relationships thrive when needs are met and falter when they are not. That fact is non-negotiable

(Gray, 2017). When people have needs that are not being met in the marriage, they either go without and suffer or get their needs met somewhere else (Gadoua, 2009).

Also, the societal pressure to achieve success in business, child-rearing, housekeeping, social connections, etc. leaves very little time and energy for loved ones. In the exploration of the question of what specific needs were not met for the female interviewees, what was prominently mentioned is financial pressure when the husband does not work or overspends, resentfulness for being unappreciated, and carrying a much bigger load than their partner. Their frustration also was with lack of compassion towards maintaining a close relationships with their family. In a couple of cases, the challenge was that the partner did not keep their word and was "dropping the ball." According to the literature,

> An individual can tell when your emotional needs are not being met. There are signs which will alert you that something is missing. These signs can help you evaluate your situation and correct the problem. The following items indicate when an individual's emotional needs are not being met: You're daydreaming too much. There is little affection. Communication has ceased. You are resentful most of the time. You're avoiding people. You're confiding too much in others (Sherrie, 2018, p. 1).

Discussion of RQ2. By exposing the challenges that married couples face, has given an awareness of social pressure for societal change of traditional male/female roles which needs to be researched more with additional studies. Out of 15 interviews, only two were having problems identifying the times when their needs were not met, and they were the two women who were in a traditional relationship with very successful man who took care of them profusely.

Results for RQ3. *RQ3* – How do married couples measure and track success in meeting each other's needs? The characteristics for a successful relationship to each individual were remarkably different. The majority of participants described honest communication, laughter and humor, as a big part of a healthy relationship. In addition to that, the financial stability was mentioned, physical attraction, balance, joint purpose, forgiveness, having fun together, connection to children independently and together, those were the prominent indicators of perception of a healthy relationship. When the researcher questioned about the indicators of needs being met, similar answers occurred that happiness, laughter, feeling loved and understood, willingness to continue the relationship, making life easier and more pleasant. Ability to interact with one another was important and so was mutual understanding of the foreseen future. Health and safety, having freedom and interdependence are also themes that surfaced. According to the literature, University of Miami researcher Blaine Fowers and colleagues (2016) developed the Relationship Flourishing Scale (RFS) to take the temperature of relationships in a new and perhaps more dynamic way than the measures currently available (Whitbourne, 2016). The categories studied were: meaning and purpose, personal growth, goal sharing, and relational giving which meant prioritizing your partner more than yourself. (Fowers et al., 2016; Whitbourne, 2016).

The final interview question was the researcher's prize possession. When the interviewees were asked if laughter can be a gauge for needs being met, every person said absolutely. The answers were unanimously in agreement, specifying that laughter is a indicator that at that moment, all of their needs are being met. According to the literature, research from the University of Kansas as studied by psychologist Jeffrey Hall has found that couples who share the same sense of humor have a stronger connection which can be a key to relationship

success (Hall, 2015a). What is strongly related to relationship satisfaction is the humor that couples create together (Hall, 2015a). Moments of shared laughter may be another such feature of high quality relationships that makes people feel they have the resources necessary to explore and grow, both together and individually (Aron et al., 2000).

Discussion of RQ3. Based on this study, the researcher concludes that laughter becomes a very valuable tool in measuring success, tracking it, and identifying that needs are being met. The researcher wanted to know if laughter was the gauge for needs being met, and the answer was a resounding yes. Laughter has always been a valued commodity in the way that we perceive human happiness. One participant said it perfectly, "when you are laughing, you are experiencing joy. When you are crying you are experiencing sadness. Laughter is associated with joy. Joy is associated with contentment. Contentment is associated with needs being met." Therefore needs being met becomes an essential ingredient that we can consciously focus on to create laughter.

Results for RQ4. *RQ4* – What recommendations would married couples give to future married couples in meeting each other's needs? This question instigated recommendations that married couples can share with future married couples. In the current climate of divorce culture, a lot of failed marriages are the norm. However, the consequences of this are devastating the society and the individuals. Therefore, giving healthy advice to newly married coupled becomes a responsibility of society to increase their chance to create a happy family. This researchers quest is to educate as many people as possible with this knowledge. There is a way to sustain happy and healthy relationships and extend the honeymoon forever. Because of that, this research is conducted. And the people who participated in it had great advice to young married couples.

One of the most important things that they expressed was to grow and learn every day. In order to be interesting and self-fulfilled, a person who is happy and exploring self-growth will bring personal happiness. Everything in nature will either grow or die, nothing is stagnant. When you don't grow, you die. Each person bringing this growth to the relationships, gives both people a desire and gratitude to stay in that partnership and feel lucky that they are in it. It is like watering the garden. If you don't the weeds will take over, and that's called divorce.

These couples also recommended to laugh and *don't take yourself too seriously*. This is great advice because playfulness is what the couple started with when they first met. They got serious with all the minutiae of life and forgot to play. It happens to a lot of people. So keeping this awareness is paramount, to have the element of fun and play is crucial for its survival. According to the literature, Jeffrey Hall's study found that when romantic partners include playfulness in their bonding process, it establishes *relational security* and when laughter is shared, it shows that there is an indication of a possible romantic attraction between future potential mates (Hall, 2015a).

Communication was also one of the staples. In one of the interviews, a piece of the puzzle came that the term *communication* is somewhat ambiguous. This was a big realization for the researcher because so many of the respondents mentioned communication, however when it was connected to needs being met, it was like a diamond in the rough. All of a sudden, it became much more clear that if we focus on communication, specifically about the needs and perfecting that communication about the needs, the relationship will benefit greatly. According to the researchers Lewandowski and Ackerman (2006), communicating one's needs is challenging within a relationship since people usually have a difficult time identifying what their own needs are and being able to express those needs to another person. A person in a

relationship must be able to identify his or her needs on a conscious level in order to communicate those needs to their partner (Lewandowski & Ackerman, 2006). In addition, to identifying your own needs, your partner must make those needs a priority in the relationship and find within themselves the motivation for meeting those needs (Lewandowski & Ackerman, 2006).

Communication needs to be about clarifying the needs that each person desires. Listening for those needs is an important part of the communication process. When the interviewees were challenged to express how important communicating needs are in the relationships, a majority of respondents said it was vital and paramount.

The final question asked if laughter is one of the benefits of meeting each other's needs, and everyone but one person said absolutely yes. "Couples who laugh together have a stronger bond, and are able to overcome the stresses and conflicts in their relationship. Shared laughter with your significant other can improve your relationship in the most enjoyable way possible" (Schoenwald, 2015, p. 1). The person who disagreed said, "for most people that works but I just don't know how to laugh." She was the outlier in the study.

Discussion of RQ4. Based on this data, the researcher concludes that future couples should use laughter as their GPS to happiness. The road to happiness is filled with a lot of unexpected, difficult obstacles, challenges and adventures. Sometimes they are pleasant and sometimes they are not. However, recognizing that there is a specific formula for how laughter is created can help them in their romantic relationships. The formula is: needs being met + humor = laughter. A sense of humor does not change. The only agreement that we need to make conscious is understanding and figuring out the needs of our partner and then meeting those needs. Laughter will be the gauge AND the reward of that.

Implications of the Study

Until your unconscious becomes conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate (Jung, 1949). This Law of Laughter dissertation is intended to help everyone who is in a relationship turn unconscious actions into conscious and intentional interactions by satisfying the needs of others and by adding humor and gauging the success of the relationship by listening for the laughter or lack of it. The ingredients that are creating laughter are hidden. Everyone experiences that, but very few can sustain it and repeat it. Once they have this research and the recognition of what it entails to create laughter or the environment for laughter, they will be able to use it in any aspect of their lives. This study will present, to those who read this, some strategies that will help couples bring more happiness and laughter back into their relationships. It will also help single people who are searching for that special someone by recognizing their capacity to meet their needs and whether they have a matching sense of humor. It can also help marriage counselors, clergy who work with couples, relationship coaches, and individuals themselves who are seeking knowledge about achieving and sustaining happiness in relationships. I would like the dissertation to be read by high school teachers who can help our future generation understand the mechanics of successful love relationships and parents who want their children to be happy. Meeting needs and incorporating humor and lightheartedness will create laughter which can be a gauge for individuals to meet the needs of others.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are several future studies that are recommended as a result of this study. Future research it recommended to prove the addition to the formula for Law of Laughter. When there is a clarity of the natural complementary opposite qualities, a romantic relationship becomes a beautiful dance of life in which one person leads with their head and the other one leads with

their heart. The formula that needs future research is the following:

Complimentary opposites + Needs being met + Shared sense of humor = Shared laughter.

Another fascinating study would be to interview the husbands of each interviewee. It would be interesting to see how many of the men have consistent results to the women in their lives or if there are any discrepancies. Men often have a different perspective on things so it would be good to test the formula with male respondents.

Unexpected information came out of this study of intelligent, successful women. Out of the 15 women, only two reported that they were extremely happy with all of their needs being met. Demographical information revealed that these women were homemakers who did not work and were at home supporting their husbands. A study that the researcher would like to see is a sample of successful career women in one group, and women who are successful in being homemakers in another group and compare their levels of satisfaction. It might be interesting to a lot of people in revealing the path that western society is heading and helpful in giving future generations a choice for which direction to go.

Recognizing that there is a societal shift amongst roles that men and women have, it would be good to do a study to see what terminology can be used to make both roles complimentary in the spirit of future marriages. An example of this is the traditional male/female role, which have also been called alpha/beta roles in the relationship. This study would explore using other terms that are more equal and inspire team spirit such as initiator/appreciator, creative/rationale, producer/director, and performer/audience. Finding a more accurate way to express these equal roles enhances the ability to collaborate versus compete.

Study Conclusion

The researcher's desire was for this phenomenological qualitative study to prove or disprove the following formula: needs being met + shared sense of humor = shared laughter. The goal was also to make people aware that the formula can be reversed, meaning that when you hear laughter you can know that a sense of humor is happening and needs are being met. The next time you hear laughter, whether it's between friends, partners, lovers, or even strangers, understand that at that moment needs were met and humor was applied.

Comedians can meet the audiences' needs by being entertaining, creative, and humorous was something that he could repeat on a regular basis. When you look at the structure of a joke, any joke, you will see that there is a set-up, punch line and laughter This study helped to confirm that meeting the needs is the set-up, sense of humor is the punch line and it all leads to laughter. So, if you are an amateur comedian or someone who enjoys laughing, you can see how important it is for the set-up to be very clear, concise and relatable. The set-up normally takes up 90% of the energy in telling a joke, and the punch line is only 10%. Recognizing this formula, if we are to put 90% of our time into understanding and meeting our partner's needs, that will ensure the 10% punch line will be able to create laughter.

Summary of the Study

The objective of this research was to understand how to identify and satisfy personal needs and the needs of your partner in order to bring about happiness within the relationship. The research questions have been restated and the research design explained. This research is characterized as a phenomenological study that uses a qualitative approach. The intent was to find the strategies that married couples use to identify and satisfy their partner's needs, understand the challenges, find solutions to track success, and provide recommendations for

other couples in relationships. The qualitative methodology applied to this study was phenomenology, and the research was conducted through the use of interviews. In other words, this study sought to understand the phenomenological meaning with respect to the strategies and practices of married couples based on their experiences (Creswell, 2013).

The researcher analyzed and transcribed the interview data by utilizing notes, data entry and storage, and coding. Notes were written when ideas or insights emerged from the researcher's personal observations of the participants, as well as from interview responses that led to follow-up questions. Data gathered from the interview process and observational notes were transcribed. The transcribed data was segmented into codes. An inductive coding procedure was utilized that began with an interim analysis. Next the responses were coded and grouped into themes. These themes were examined to provide explanations of the problem. The inductive approach was used frequently as part of qualitative data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The reasons for utilizing an inductive approach was to "condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief, summary format; establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data; and develop a model or theory about the underlying structure of experiences or processes which are evident in the raw data" (Thomas, 2003, p. 5).

The researcher is greatly pleased with the results of this study. It gives confidence that the formula for a Law of Laughter is being revealed. This law has been practiced for thousands of years but few studies have been done to quantify it. Like any law of nature, whether its gravity or magnetism, there is a learning curve for recognizing that it exists and then making it conscious and available for the world to embrace. At the time when there were only candles, torches and fires to provide light, Thomas Edison had an idea and wanted to give people an

opportunity to see in the dark. Edison noticed that when you connect the plus and minus of a battery it creates a spark (Gelb & Caldicott, 2007). He pictured containing that spark in an environment where it can sustain itself, giving continuous light. And after 10,000 experiments, he gave the world the first light bulb (Gelb & Caldicott, 2007). .

This research noticed a similar scenario in creating laughter. It happens effortlessly during the honeymoon stage of the relationship, but then the spark dies out and the only people who are laughing are divorce attorneys. And they are laughing all the way to the bank. The researcher believes that if you can contain this spark of laughter in an environment in which needs of the partner are met, like the light switch, the shared sense of humor will turn on the *laugh bulb* that will brighten the future of the entire family. If we bring laughter back to the dinner table, it is contagious and it will spread through the neighborhood, the city, the state through the country and soon America will be laughing again.

After analyzing all the data the researcher believes that the formula for laughter is lacking an important element. Complementary opposites need to be added to make it complete: *Complimentary opposites + Needs being met + Shared sense of humor = Shared laughter.* Literature research needs to be done to confirm this speculation. The reason for this revelation is that opposites attract and in the honeymoon stage of the relationship they create a lot of laughter. According to the literature, unfortunately, this honeymoon only lasted about a year and the societal influence for equality, which is an inevitable progress of the humanity also creates an element of sameness. This researcher believes that it's exactly what kills laughter in the long-term relationship. Complimentary opposites are a significant part of our world. Night complements day, listener compliments speaker, an audience compliments a performer, and life itself is created by intercourse of two complementary opposites.

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APPENDIX A

IRB Approval Notice

Date: March 11, 2019

Protocol Investigator Name: Yakov Smirnoff
Protocol #: 18-10-888
Project Title: Law of Laughter (LOL)
School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Yakov Smirnoff:

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

cc: Mrs. Katy Carr, Assistant Provost for Research

Pepperdine University 24255 Pacific Coast Highway Malibu, CA 90263 TEL: 310-506-4000

APPENDIX B

Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Research on the Law of Laughter (LOL)

Hello. My name is Yakov Smirnoff. You are invited to participate in a research study that I am doing for graduate degree at Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology. I got your email from the Lifelong Learning Lecture series where I was a guest speaker on November 8th, 2018.Your participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to better understand the ingredient that is essential for creating happiness and laughter, which is hypothesized as meeting your partner's needs. The researchers intention is to interview 15 women that have been married for at least three years, with the objective to understand how they identify their partners needs or the challenges they have in communication of needs, and how they know if they have met the needs of their partner. This study will help answer the question, "will laughter be a gauge of happiness when the needs are being met?" The investigator will start by collecting some demographical information from you including your gender, age, children and marital status.

STUDY PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a brief survey with demographical information, and then answer questions regarding 4 concepts regarding your romantic relationship. Your answers will be voice-recorded and the audio file will be saved under a pseudonym for three years and then destroyed. Your consent form, demographical information and survey responses will also be uploaded to an electronic file and saved for three years in a password protected file for three years under the same pseudonym. After three years, the files will be deleted.

Altogether, the interview should take no more than 90 minutes of your time to complete. You will also be asked if you would like to share any additional information on the topic.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The potential and foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study include possible

emotional discomfort at the thoughts surrounding romantic relationships.

The researcher is not aware of any unusual risks or physical requirements associated with this data collection.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

While there are no direct benefits to the study participants, there are several anticipated benefits to society which include helping people increase the laughter and happiness in romantic relationships.

No compensation will be given for this survey.

CONFIDENTIALITY

I will keep your records for this study as far as permitted by law. However, if I am required to do so by law, I may be required to disclose information collected about you. Examples of the types of issues that would require me to break confidentiality are if you tell me about instances of child abuse and elder abuse. Pepperdine's University's Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) may also access the data collected.The HSPP occasionally reviews and monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

ALTERNATIVES TO FULL PARTICIPATION

The alternative to participation in the study is not participating. There is no provision for engaging in the project on anything less than a full-participant basis.

INVESTIGATOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

I understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries I may have concerning the research herein described. I understand that I may contact *Yakov Smirnoff* if I have any other questions or concerns about this research.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant or research in general please contact Dr. Judy Ho, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board at Ocean View University 6100 Center Drive Suite 500 Los Angeles, CA, 90045, 310-568-5753 or gpsirb@pepperdine.edu.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I have read the information provided above. I have been given a chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

AUDIO/VIDEO/PHOTOGRAPHS*(If this is not applicable to your study and/or if participants do not have a choice of being audio/video-recorded or photographed, delete this section.)*

□*I agree to be audio-recorded*

□ *I do not want to be audio-recorded*

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant   **Date**

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I have explained the research to the participants and answered all of his/her questions. In my judgment the participants are knowingly, willingly and intelligently agreeing to participate in this study. They have the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study and all of the various components. They also have been informed participation is voluntarily and that they may discontinue their participation in the study at any time, for any reason.

Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   **Date**

APPENDIX C

Recruitment Script

Dear [Name],

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Yakov Smirnoff at Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology because you attended the Lifelong Learning Lecture series on November 8th, 2019 and may be eligible to participate in this study. Your participation is voluntary.

STUDY PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a brief survey with demographical information, and then answer questions regarding 4 concepts regarding your romantic relationship. Your answers will be voice-recorded and the audio file will be saved under a pseudonym for three years and then destroyed. Your consent form, demographical information and survey responses will also be uploaded to an electronic file and saved for three years in a password protected file for three years under the same pseudonym. After three years, the files will be deleted. Altogether, the interview should take no more than 90 minutes your time to complete. You will also be asked if you would like to share any additional information on the topic.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to better understand the ingredient that is essential for creating happiness and laughter, which is hypothesized as meeting your partner's needs. The researcher's intention is to interview 15 women that have been married for at least three years, are financially secure, and have been together beyond the first two stages of romantic relationships. The objective is to understand how you identify your partners needs or the challenges you have in communication of needs, and how you know if you have met the needs of your partner. This study will help answer the question, "will laughter be a gauge of happiness when the needs are being met?" The investigator will start by collecting some demographical information from you including your gender, age, children and marital status.

Please let me know if you are interested in participating and some times that might work for you to have an interview in the next day or two.

Would you have an hour this week when I can interview you? I leave Monday for NYC for my Love and Laughter your and will return March 27th.

Thank you for your participation,

Love and Laughter
Yakov

Yakov Smirnoff
Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology
Status: Doctoral Student