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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NEGATIVE SELF-DISCLOSURE  
AND MARITAL SATISFACTION:  
A QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION

by

INES ESTEVES-WESSMAN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in  
Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,  
The City University of New York

1998

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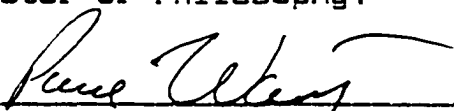
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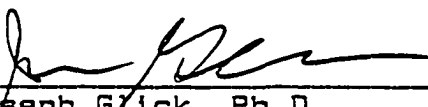
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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## Abstract

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NEGATIVE SELF-DISCLOSURE  
AND MARITAL SATISFACTION:  
A QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION

by

Ines Esteves-Wessman

Advisor: Professor Paul L. Wachtel

Self-disclosure, the sharing of private thoughts and feelings, is viewed as a central component of intimacy, providing a vital avenue both for relationship development and for the maintenance of satisfaction within established relationships. Studies interested in valence (the positive or negative nature of what is shared) generally have rested with comparisons between positive and negative disclosures, finding, unsurprisingly, that the former are more conducive to relationship formation and to satisfaction in long-term relationships. Given the inevitability of expressing various types of negative thoughts and feelings in the course of a marriage, however, the importance of a more specific examination of negative disclosure and its relationship to marital satisfaction becomes apparent.

The first phase of the research sought to refine the concept of negative self-disclosure by distinguishing between three types: 1) general (GND), 2) self-critical (NSR), and 3) spouse-critical (CRS). Comparisons were made between more and less satisfied couples in terms of the female partner's degree of likelihood to share negative thoughts and feelings in each of these three categories.

The second phase explored qualitative differences between more and less satisfied couples in terms of the female partner's actual mode of disclosure as well as her approach to decision-making about negative self-disclosure.

The quantitative data yielded mixed results. When either the wife's rating or the combined husband/wife's rating of the marriage was taken as the index of satisfaction, no differences were found in likelihood to disclose in any of the three categories of negative disclosure. When the husband's rating was used, a significant difference in spouse-criticisms (CRS) was found, both in terms of frequency ( $p < .01$ ) and proportion ( $p < .05$ ), with higher CRS among women whose husbands were in the more satisfied group. There was also a lower proportion of general negative disclosures (GND) ( $p < .05$ ) among these women. Qualitatively, women in more and less satisfied relationships differed in that women in the first category demonstrated more consideration for their partner's needs and for the overall good of the relationship when making decisions about what to share and how to share it.

The relationship between negative self-disclosure and marital satisfaction, then, is not purely negative, as the literature suggests; true understanding of this relationship requires a close exploration of an individual's approach toward sharing negative thoughts and feelings within his or her marriage in order to fully comprehend the attitudes conveyed to the recipient through those disclosures.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project, and indeed much of my graduate school education, could not have been completed successfully without the cooperation, assistance, generosity and expertise of many wonderful people. I would like to begin by thanking the members of my dissertation committee: Professors Paul Wachtel, Steven Tuber, and Laurence Gould. I am very grateful to Prof. Wachtel, who chaired this project. Early in my graduate training, he inspired me and shaped my work as a clinician through the intelligent and sensitive way in which he both talks and writes about the process of psychotherapy; as a mentor, both in courses and throughout the dissertation, he provided me with valuable knowledge and insight as well as constant encouragement and support. His guidance, caring, and patience are much appreciated. Prof. Tuber has been a source of great support and inspiration throughout my graduate education; his guidance and genuine warmth made me feel "at home" at City, and his expertise and sensitivity as a clinician strongly and positively influenced my approach toward working with children. Prof. Gould also has been a valued mentor, informing my clinical work and conveying a genuine sense of caring and respect for me. My sincere gratitude goes to all three of these people for their invaluable guidance and support during this project and throughout my graduate training.

I also would like to thank Professors Vera Paster and I.H. Paul, not only for serving as readers, but for adding so much to my knowledge of theory and psychotherapeutic technique. Special thanks go to Prof. Paster, not only for her genuine warmth toward me and support for my professional and personal development, but for educating me and deeply influencing my clinical work with families and couples.

I am very grateful to Prof. A.J. Franklin for the knowledge he imparted to me in the courses I took with him and for the great encouragement and personal warmth he conveyed to me throughout my graduate experience. In addition, I am profoundly thankful to him for having nominated me for various fellowships, most notably the President's Dissertation Year Fellowship (MAGNET program), without which completion of the dissertation, much less the rest of graduate school, would have been nearly impossible.

As noted above, I am grateful beyond words for the generous fellowships which I have received. The Graduate School Fellowship ("Super-Fellowship), which I was awarded upon entering the program, dramatically assisted my progress as did the University Fellowship and various assistantships. The Dissertation Fellowship particularly helped me at a time when various life constraints probably would have prevented me from finishing. I owe an enormous debt to the people and institutions who made these sources of funding available.

I also would like to thank the administrators and teachers of the school system in which I conducted my

research. I learned a great deal from them and appreciate their generosity in terms of time and interest. In addition, I am very grateful to Prof. Howard Spivak, of Brooklyn College, for his expert help in analyzing the data.

\*\*\*\*\*

There literally are no words strong enough to convey my thanks for the innumerable ways in which my family has supported and encouraged me throughout my education. My grandparents, Luis and Neida Rodriguez, through their boundless love and assistance, inspired me to work hard and greatly facilitated this project. My mother-in-law and father-in-law, Jane and Alden Wessman, helped in countless ways, from lovingly caring for my daughter so that I could work, to conveying a steady belief in my ability to finish.

My deepest and most heartfelt thanks go to my husband, Kit, and to my mother, Thelma Esteves. Without their love and practical and emotional assistance, this project and the entire graduate school process would have been impossible. My mother did everything imaginable to facilitate my progress, from making contacts for data collection and helping with baby-sitting, to reading drafts and encouraging me when I was most discouraged. Kit's constant love and faith in me, and his limitless support, always reminded me of what was most important in life and provided the loving environment which sustained me. Without him, our children, Kate and Steven, and the beautiful life I have with my family, no professional accomplishment could have meaning.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION .....	1
II.	REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	5
III.	METHODOLOGY .....	26
IV.	RESULTS FOR THE QUANTITATIVE DATA .....	50
V.	FINDINGS ON THE INTERVIEW DATA .....	66
VI.	DISCUSSION .....	104
	APPENDICES .....	124
	REFERENCES .....	172

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	Means, Standard Deviations, and Medians for Demographic Variables .....	30
Table 2.	Frequencies and Percentages for Demographic Variables .....	31
Table 3.	Summary Statistics for NSDS Scores for all 28 Subjects .....	50
Table 4.	Summary Statistics for MSS Scores for all 28 Subjects and Their Spouses .....	52
Tables 5A-5G.	T-Tests for all Hypotheses Using Combined Subject/Spouse MSS Ratings as Definition of Satisfaction .....	166
Tables 6A-6G.	T-Tests for all Hypotheses Using Subject MSS as Definition of Satisfaction .....	168
Tables 7A-7G.	T-Tests for all Hypotheses Using Spouse MSS as Definition of Satisfaction .....	170

## I: INTRODUCTION

Difficulties achieving and maintaining intimate relationships comprise the largest cluster of problems for which people seek psychotherapy, with marital difficulties in particular cited as a chief complaint for 50% of outpatients (Korowitz, 1979; Sager et al., 1968). The preponderance of such difficulties in the population, as well as general societal concerns over high divorce rates and the dissolution of the American family, underscore the importance of engaging in research which seeks to identify and illuminate typically problematic areas of relationship functioning. Such research informs clinical work, allowing therapists to target trouble spots more effectively and to devise treatment plans to alter dysfunctional patterns of interaction.

An important first step in addressing marital and intimacy-related problems lies in identifying the central components of intimacy itself. Among the various aspects of this variable noted by both researchers and theoreticians, self-disclosure -- the sharing of private thoughts, feelings, or attitudes -- consistently has emerged as one of the most vital elements of an intimate relationship (Perlman & Duck, 1987; Chelune et al., 1984b; Waring et al., 1981; Waring et al., 1980; Schaefer & Olson, 1981). In newly forming relationships, self-disclosure provides the vehicle through which people may come to know, like, and trust one

another in increasingly meaningful ways; in established relationships, such feelings ideally are strengthened and reaffirmed as individuals continue to share more intimate aspects of themselves (Altman & Taylor, 1973).

Although self-disclosure provides a vital avenue both for relationship development and for the maintenance of satisfaction within established relationships, it can exert a decidedly detrimental effect on human interaction if used indiscriminately. The sharing of negative thoughts or feelings (negative disclosure), for example, has been shown to interfere with the important first stages of relationship formation (liking, desire for further contact etc.) and is associated with dissatisfaction and feelings of distance in such long-term relationships as marriage (Taylor & Belgrave, 1986; Lynn & Bates, 1985; Gilbert & Korenstein, 1975; Caltabiano et al, 1983; Waring, 1987; Chelune et al, 1984; Levinger & Senn, 1967).

Self-disclosure research addressing the issue of valence (ie. the positive or negative quality of what is revealed) has tended to focus on comparisons between the impact of positive versus negative disclosures on relationship satisfaction (Taylor & Belgrave, 1986; Lynn & Bates, 1985; Gilbert & Korenstein, 1975; Caltabiano et al, 1983; Waring, 1987; Waring et al., 1980; Waring et al., 1981; Chelune et al, 1984; Levinger & Senn, 1967). Resting with the relatively unsurprising finding that positive disclosures correlate more strongly with satisfaction than

negative ones, researchers have failed to distinguish between various forms of negative disclosure which may influence a relationship in different ways. They have also neglected to explore the different ways in which people actually express such negative thoughts and/or feelings.

Given the potentially damaging impact of negative disclosures, and the inevitability of experiencing -- and expressing -- various types of negative thoughts and feelings over the course of a marriage, it is particularly important to broaden and deepen our understanding of this component of intimate behavior. The present research attempts to expand the current findings on the relationship between self-disclosure and marital satisfaction in two general ways:

1) By focusing on the influence of *negative* disclosures and attempting to differentiate between three forms:

a) *General Negative Disclosures (GND)* -- disclosures (to one's spouse) of negative thoughts or feelings which do not specifically relate to oneself or one's spouse (eg. frustration, anger, or disappointment with social issues, interpersonal situations, a job etc.).

b) *Negative Self-References (NSR)* -- disclosures (to one's spouse) of negative or critical thoughts or feelings about the self (eg. feelings of failure or inadequacy).

c) *Criticisms/ Negative Disclosures about the Spouse (CRS)* -- disclosures (to one's spouse) of negative or critical thoughts or feelings about one's spouse (eg. feelings of frustration, disappointment, or annoyance with one's spouse).

2) By exploring qualitative differences in approaches to negative disclosure within the marital relationship -- differences in how decisions are made about which negative thoughts and feelings should be shared, and in how this should be done.

In clarifying which types of negative disclosures relate most strongly to marital dissatisfaction, and in illuminating which approaches to negative disclosure characterize satisfied marriages, such research will help therapists to assist dysfunctional couples in more effectively navigating this tricky, but inevitable, area of self-disclosure.

## II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Self-disclosure, the "process by which one person lets himself be known by another person" through sharing private thoughts, feelings, dreams, attitudes and beliefs (Derlega & Chaikin, 1975, p. 1; Waring et al., 1980), represents a vital avenue for relationship formation and maintenance. A review of the literature reveals that self-disclosure is viewed, not only by theorists and researchers, but by the population at large, as a vital component of intimacy (Perlman & Duck, 1987; Clinebell & Clinebell, 1970; Waring, 1981; Waring et al., 1980; Waring et al, 1981; Schaefer & Olson, 1981; Chelune et al, 1984).

Preliminary research in the field of self-disclosure focused primarily on identifying its underlying components, on devising adequate measurement devices, and on clarifying the relationship between self-disclosure and such diverse variables as age, race, nationality, religion, Rorschach productivity, and various personality factors (Jourard & Lasakow, 1958; Jourard, 1959; Jourard, 1961 a, b, c, d, and e; Jourard, 1971 a&b; Cozby, 1973; Wheelless, 1976; Wheelless & Grotz, 1976). Since self-disclosure, by its very definition, involves the interaction of two human beings, however, attention rapidly turned to the examination of the role of this variable in the formation and maintenance of interpersonal relationships.

***Self-disclosure as a vehicle for relationship***

***development*** Self-disclosure has been shown to be an extremely important vehicle for relationship development and friendship formation. Through what is known as the "social penetration process," people in newly forming interpersonal relationships gradually expand both the depth and the breadth of their disclosures (they reveal increasingly personal information about a wider variety of topics) as they come to know and trust one another (Altman & Haythorn, 1965; Taylor, 1968; Altman & Taylor, 1973); meaningful self-disclosure is not merely a sign that mutual knowledge, trust, and liking already exist, it is the mechanism through which these things are established. Since people tend to reciprocate disclosures with ones that are equally or slightly more intimate, they come to know and trust one another gradually (Jourard & Friedman, 1970; Jourard & Resnick, 1970; Worthy et al. 1969), with no single member of the dyad making him or herself significantly more vulnerable than the other.

***Self-disclosure: not unequivocally associated with relationship satisfaction*** Despite the vital role played by self-disclosure in the establishment of interpersonal relationships, it would be incorrect to assume that self-revelation always exerts a positive impact on human interaction. Although Sidney Jourard and others viewed the degree of self-disclosure as "an index of [the] closeness" between two people and demonstrated a positive correlation

between liking and the degree of self-revelation (Jourard & Lasakow, 1958; Jourard, 1959; Jourard, 1971b; Worthy et. al., 1969), other researchers tempered these findings by showing a significant decrease in liking at high levels of intimate disclosure (Cozby, 1972; Chaikin & Derlega, 1974b; Taylor, 1968). Noting that people who disclosed moderately intimate information (medium disclosers) were liked significantly more than either high or low disclosers, Cozby (1972) proposed a curvilinear relationship between liking and self-disclosure; since high disclosers were disliked more than low disclosers, and since low disclosers were only moderately disliked (their "liking ratings" fell close to the neutral point of the scale), Cozby further concluded that high disclosers cause significant discomfort and avoidance in their recipients, whereas low disclosers appear so distant that they arouse little emotion or interest -- either way, these two groups fail to elicit reactions conducive to relationship formation.

***Determining the impact of self-disclosure on relationship formation: attention to issues of appropriateness***

Given that self-disclosure is not in fact unequivocally associated with intimacy and relationship satisfaction, it becomes important to consider the appropriateness of the disclosure by examining its specific elements, the circumstances under which it occurs, and the reactions which it engenders. The research team of Derlega & Chaikin (1975), long interested in the norms governing

self-disclosing behavior, argue that "healthy" disclosures must suit the time, the occasion, and the relationship between the participants, and must take into account such factors as age, topic, status, role, and cultural background.

***The importance of considering degree of familiarity with target individuals*** Chaikin and Derlega (1974 a & b) stress the significance of the degree of familiarity with the target individual and propose the existence of a norm prohibiting intimate disclosure to a stranger, finding that those who revealed a great deal to a stranger (high revealers) were evaluated as more inappropriate and maladjusted than low revealers, and that, among friends, disclosure was rated as more appropriate than non-disclosure. Other studies expand on these findings and speak to the importance of being able to vary the intimacy level of a disclosure according to the target individuals, suggesting that "neurotics" fail to discriminate between interpersonal situations which do and do not warrant intimate disclosures, revealing themselves at a set level (low or high) regardless of the people to whom they were disclosing (Chaikin et al, 1975). Cozby's study (1972) echoes these findings, suggesting that both over- and under-disclosure to a stranger interfere with the formation of relationships, the former because it creates anxiety, discomfort, and avoidance in the recipient, and the latter because it prevents bonding and discourages the recipient

from further overtures of friendship. The same researcher concludes a vast review of the literature by stating that healthy individuals "... are characterized by high disclosure to a few significant others and medium disclosure to others in the social environment ... [while] the poorly adjusted ... are characterized by either high or low disclosure to virtually everyone ..." (Cozby, 1973, p. 78).

*The importance of considering valence of self-disclosure* Although target group (ie. ability to vary disclosure level according to degree of familiarity) has been the most widely researched variable determining the appropriateness (and thus effectiveness) of self-disclosure, other variables have emerged which similarly stress that one must consider specific factors and issues surrounding a disclosure in order to determine its impact on relationship satisfaction and well-being. One such variable is valence, defined as the "positiveness or negativeness of what is said" (Gilbert, 1976, p. 222). It is a variable that exerts its effect not only on relationship development, but on the maintenance of long-term relationships such as marriage.

#### Impact of valence on developing relationships

In terms of developing relationships, a variety of findings have suggested that positive disclosures promote relationship formation, while negative ones interfere with the normal processes of social penetration. Taylor and Belgrave (1986) report that self-disclosures of a positive

valence elicit higher levels of reciprocity than those of a negative valence and, correspondingly, that negative disclosures diminish a subject's degree of reciprocity, suggesting that recipients of negative disclosures seek to limit further interaction with the discloser while recipients of positive disclosures exhibit a willingness to deepen their connection to the discloser. One possible explanation is that shifts in intimacy that are negative in nature evoke behaviors (ie. withdrawal/reduced disclosure) designed to lessen the existing unpleasant affective state, while positive shifts in intimacy elicit behaviors designed to increase the pleasant affective state (Patterson, 1976).

The valence of a disclosure not only influences the degree to which it will be reciprocated, but also the opinions that the recipient will form of the discloser. Gilbert and Korenstein (1975) report that valence has an even stronger impact on ratings of attraction than does intimacy level of disclosure, with higher degrees of attraction being reported for positive disclosers -- and lower ones for negative disclosers -- regardless of the level of intimacy at which they had disclosed. Lynn and Bates (1985) note that subjects rate confederates who report negative attitudes as more psychologically impaired and depressed than confederates who report positive attitudes; they also exhibit greater avoidance of and withdrawal from the negative disclosers and are more willing to reciprocate and disclose intimately about themselves in response to a

positive disclosure. Caltabiano and Smithson (1983) echo these findings, noting that positive disclosure is rated as more appropriate than negative disclosure, with the positive disclosers viewed as more adjusted and emotionally stable and more desirable candidates for future contact.

***Is there an appropriate arena for negative disclosures?***

Given that positive disclosures are rated as more appropriate and more conducive to relationship development than negative ones, one may wonder whether negativity is universally viewed as damaging and inappropriate, or whether there is in fact a place for such negative disclosures. Gilbert and Whiteneck (1976), who revealed that subjects report a greater likelihood of sharing highly negative disclosures with people with whom they had an established relationship (eg. friend/spouse) than with someone they did not know as well (eg. stranger/acquaintance), propose that negative disclosures may be viewed as inappropriate within non-intimate relationships, with negativity of disclosure reserved for only intimate relationships. Others have similarly suggested that negativity interferes with optimal relationship development because it sets up the expectation that future interactions will be unpleasant or unrewarding (Blau, 1964; Gilbert & Korenstein, 1976).

***Established relationships: better able to weather negativity, but still vulnerable to its detrimental effects***  
These collective findings suggest that negative disclosures belong in established relationships, rather than in newly

forming ones, seemingly because there they will not interfere with the initial positive feelings essential to nurturing a desire for future contact. Social exchange theory and social penetration theory would suggest that longer term relationships are better able to weather periods of negativity ("costs") because of a history which includes positive interactions ("rewards") which offset and balance the periods of cost (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959); these theories, however, do include the warning that when reward/cost balances fall too heavily or consistently in the direction of cost, the relationship may not survive. An awareness of the impact of one's disclosures on the other -- and thus a sensitivity by the discloser to certain cues of distress and overburdenment on the part of the recipient (Coates & Winston, 1987) -- may be crucial in determining whether negative disclosures *de facto* damage established relationships. Before returning to the question of which capacities on the part of the discloser may mediate the impact of his or her negative disclosures on the relationship, we must briefly review the general findings about the influence of self-disclosure on marital satisfaction.

#### Relationship between self-disclosure & marital satisfaction

**General findings** Given that disclosures within marriage are greater and more consistent than in any other relationship (Jourard & Lasakow, 1958), and considering that

self-disclosure has been widely viewed -- not only by theoreticians but by research subjects themselves -- as a central component of intimacy (Perlman & Duck, 1987; Waring, 1981; Waring et al., 1980; Waring et al., 1981; Schaefer & Olson, 1981), it is not surprising that a host of researchers have sought to establish a direct link between self-disclosure and marital satisfaction. Although one early research team failed to find a significant relationship between the two variables (Shapiro & Swensen, 1969), and certain philosophical writers have warned that great degrees of openness in marriage promote boredom and diminished attraction (Koch, 1972; Simmel, 1964), the greater body of research has supported the existence of a positive relationship between self-disclosure and marital satisfaction (Levinger & Senn, 1967; Jorgensen & Gaudy, 1980; Hendrick, 1981; Dickson-Markman, 1984; Chelune et al., 1984b; Antill & Cotton, 1987).

*Importance of considering the elements of self-disclosure* As with the previously mentioned studies of the impact of self-disclosure on relationship formation, a closer look at the literature on disclosure within marriage reveals the importance of considering not simply the amount and/or level of intimacy of disclosures, but a variety of other intervening variables. Dickson-Markman (1984), building on the earlier work of Wheelless (1976) and Wheelless & Grotz (1976), stresses the multidimensional nature of self-disclosure -- citing the importance of differential

examinations of amount, intent, honesty, valence, and depth -- and demonstrates that honesty/intent and valence of self-disclosure more significantly predict marital satisfaction than amount or depth. Gilbert (1976), in reviewing the literature and reflecting on her own studies on the impact of negative disclosures on attraction (Gilbert & Horenstein, 1975), similarly urges researchers to consider the qualitative elements of a disclosure -- primarily the content (what exactly is said about what topics) and the valence (the positiveness or negativeness of what is said) -- before generalizing about the effect of self-disclosure on relationship satisfaction.

The impact of valence on established relationships

***Valence: a variable that mediates the relationship between self-disclosure and marital satisfaction.***

***Negative self-references -- not conducive to satisfaction*** A number of researchers and clinicians particularly underscore the significance of valence as a variable which mediates the relationship between self-disclosure and marital satisfaction. Chelune et al. (1984b) find self-disclosure to be a major co-variate of marital intimacy (and thus an important component of marital satisfaction), but, after breaking down disclosure into a number of sub-categories, note that although positive self-references correlate positively with marital intimacy, negative self-references have an inverse relationship with that variable. In their final discussion, the researchers

emphasize the importance of discretion in marital disclosure, reminding clinicians that although intimacy and marital satisfaction might be increased "by facilitating the open expression of personal attitudes, beliefs, and ideas between partners [ie.self-disclosure] ... not all disclosures may be constructive ... marital therapists may be well advised not to encourage couples to merely 'let it all hang out'" (pp. 218-19).

***The expression of anger and criticism - antithetical to closeness*** Waring (1987), in describing the utility of cognitive self-disclosure therapy in improving marital intimacy, distinguishes between types of disclosures, urging therapists to suppress the expression of anger and criticism while encouraging an exploration of family history and personal values (which may elucidate the reasons for conflict and negative feelings); his philosophy emerges from his own previous research in which subjects ranked the sharing of private thoughts, dreams, beliefs and fantasies (general self-disclosure) among the most important aspects of intimacy while viewing the expression of anger, resentment and criticism (negatively valenced types of disclosure) as antithetical to closeness (Waring et al., 1980; Waring et al., 1981).

***Sharing unpleasant feelings -- not as satisfying*** Levinger and Senn (1967) support the general finding that self-disclosure relates positively with marital satisfaction, but note that satisfaction related strongly

with disclosure of pleasant feelings (not with unpleasant feelings) and with disclosure on topics which had been rated as "favorable" by the subjects; they further report a much higher frequency of unpleasant disclosures among clinical couples and a relative inability within this group to differentiate between pleasant and unpleasant disclosures in important versus unimportant topic areas (non-clinical couples discussed more about their pleasant feelings and rated these areas of discussion as being important). They conclude by saying that "talking about one's feelings does not necessarily refer to spilling out everything ... selective disclosure of feelings seems more beneficial to marital harmony than indiscriminate catharsis" (p. 246).

*Sharing feelings of disappointment in the relationship*

-- *non-adjustive*      Another early study (Cutler & Dyer, 1965), which focused on whether or not certain types of disclosures were adjustive (adjustive responses reduce disturbance in the relationship, while non-adjustive responses intensify differences and disturbance), found that an open sharing of feelings of disappointment in the relationship was more consistently associated with non-adjustment. They suggest that a successful sharing of such negative feelings may require attention to a variety of conditions such as "... proper timing, suitable circumstances for sharing sensitive information, a non-threatening method of presentat[ion] ..." and careful consideration of the recipient's self-image, level of

maturity, and capacity for dealing effectively with the material disclosed (p.200).

***Quantitative aspects of self-disclosure -- not as important as qualitative*** A number of studies, sensing the importance of underlying aspects of self-disclosure, attempt to differentiate between quantitative (eg. amount or depth) and qualitative dimensions of the variable. Schumm et al. (1986) underscore the detrimental effects of "low quality" disclosures, stressing the importance of attending to issues of valence and to conveying positive rather than negative regard within one's marriage. Tolstedt and Stokes (1984), in examining the depenetration process in relationships, note that as intimacy decreases, valence gets more negative while depth increases; their findings suggest that high self-disclosure of negative valence is antithetical to relationship satisfaction. Bienvenu (1970), in developing an instrument to discriminate between effective and non-effective communication patterns in marriage, isolates an item that most powerfully distinguishes between good and poor marital communication: "Does your spouse have a tendency to say things which would be better left unsaid?" In discussing their overall findings, they conclude that "... selective communication is preferable to sheer volume ... it is the effective control and direction of the communication process which distinguishes satisfying marriages."

\*\*\*\*\*

Taken as a whole, then, the literature suggests that, although self-disclosure -- generally speaking -- provides a vital avenue for both relationship development and for the maintenance of satisfaction within established relationships, negative disclosures interfere with the important first stages of relationship formation and are associated with dissatisfaction and feelings of distance within such long-term relationships as marriage. This widely supported finding, however, raises a number of important questions. First, one might ask whether all forms of negativity (eg. negative self-references, criticisms, general expressions of negative emotion) are equally as damaging to relationships, or whether various types of negativity have differential effects on relationship satisfaction; second, one might consider whether certain qualitative differences in the approach to negative disclosure might mediate its impact on relationship satisfaction.

#### A need to distinguish between types of negativity

A close examination of the literature reveals an absence of clarity with respect to the concept of negative disclosure. Most researchers who include valence in their consideration of the effects of self-disclosure, concentrate primarily on the differential impacts of positive versus negative disclosures. They stop at demonstrating the more beneficial effects of positive as opposed to negative self-

disclosures (broadly defined), and fail to look more closely at the content and subject of these disclosures to see whether distinct forms of negativity exert differential effects on relationship formation and maintenance. Given the potentially damaging impact of negative disclosures within a relationship, it would seem important to clarify which types of negativity are most problematic (if indeed there is a difference at all).

A brief overview of various studies illustrates the wide variety of ways in which negativity has been conceptualized in the literature. Schumm et al. (1986), although ostensibly interested in valence of self-disclosure, incorporate questions which tap into underlying valence-related issues within the marriage (eg. positive versus negative regard and empathy -- the degree to which the individual feels respected and understood by his/her partner) rather than questions about the positiveness or negativeness of the actual disclosures occurring in the relationship. Bienvenu (1970) suggests the negative impact of verbalizing certain things within a marriage, but does not specify which kinds of statements are most harmful. Taylor and Belgrave (1986), Gilbert and Korenstein (1975), and Lynn and Bates (1985) distinguish between reactions to positive and negative disclosures by putting their subjects into experimental situations in which confederates confide experiences, ideas, or emotions of either a positive or negative nature. The negative disclosures included in the

confederates' scripts pertain to aspects of their own personal life, thoughts, experiences, and/or attitudes; the disclosers express generally negative feelings about life events etc., but do not specifically direct their negative thoughts at the recipient or at themselves (ie. they are not critical of the subject or of themselves). Levinger and Senn (1967) ask subjects to indicate the degree to which they disclose to their spouse pleasant versus unpleasant feelings about nine specific objects of communication including such disparate areas as "work," "the residence," "the handling of money," and "sexual relations with the spouse." Given the wide range of topics covered, and the broad way in which the question of pleasant vs. unpleasant feelings might be interpreted, negativity in this study might imply general negative feelings about some neutral topic, negative feelings about oneself, or negative feelings about one's spouse. Tolstedt and Stokes' (1984) conceptualization of negativity may also be interpreted broadly; both critical statements and statements involving general unpleasant or undesirable feelings are included in their category of negative disclosure. Waring (1987), in warning clinicians to limit open expressions of anger and criticisms while encouraging other types of disclosures, makes some preliminary suggestion about the impact of negative disclosures which are critical in nature, but does not specifically study the differential effects of various types of negative disclosures. Cutler and Dyer (1965), in

exploring the outcome of sharing feelings of disappointment in the marriage, more specifically employ negative disclosures that pertain to the spouse and carry a component of criticism, while Chelune et al. (1984b), in distinguishing between positive and negative self-references, concern themselves with the consequences of sharing information about unfavorable aspects of the self -- what potentially could be considered self-critical disclosures. Dickson-Markman (1984) similarly employs questions pertaining to disclosures of negative (versus positive) aspects of the self in the "Valence" portion of her study.

Three distinct forms of negative disclosure emerge from an examination of these various studies: 1) disclosures involving negative feelings which are not specifically self-critical in nature and which do not imply a criticism of the recipient (eg. feelings of frustration or disappointment with certain life experiences), 2) disclosures which are self-critical in nature and reflect negative feelings or attitudes about the self, and 3) disclosures of negative or critical feelings or attitudes about the recipient. In order to simplify future references to these three types of negative disclosure, they will be referred to respectively as "General Negative Disclosures," "Negative Self-References," and "Criticisms / Negative Disclosure about the Spouse."

The literature on valence of self-disclosure has suffered as a result of imprecise definitions of valence (and particularly of negativity), and because of the tendency to focus simply on the contrast between negative and positive disclosures. The finding that positive self-disclosures promote relationship formation and satisfaction to a greater extent than negative ones is not particularly surprising. What remains to be clarified, however, is whether certain types of negativity are more damaging than others. Before the impact of negative disclosures on relationships, and particularly on committed relationships, can be understood more completely, a differential exploration of the effects of these three different forms of negativity must be undertaken. Before more fully discussing how this might be done in the next chapter, I turn to the second question of whether certain qualitative differences in the approach to negative disclosures might mediate the effect these statements have on a relationship.

#### Qualitative differences in approach to negative disclosures

Although the issue of qualitative differences in approach to self-disclosure has been raised in most writing in this field, it has not been studied directly. Many authors, in the conclusions to their studies, make general statements about the complex array of factors which may mediate the effects of self-disclosure on relationship satisfaction. They speak of the importance of discretion and selectivity and warn that certain things may be "better

left unsaid," but they fail to inquire specifically about how such decisions might be made most successfully (Levinger & Senn, 1967; Derlega & Chaikin, 1975; Bienvenu, 1970; Schaefer & Olson, 1981; Waring et al., 1980; Waring et al., 1981; Chelune et al., 1984b). They suggest the importance of sensitivity on the part of the discloser -- to the recipient's needs, vulnerabilities, or feelings of overburdenment -- and the capacity to choose the appropriate time, circumstances, and mode of presentation for sharing particular kinds of information with a particular person -- but they do not investigate specifically these issues (Cutler & Dyer, 1965; Coates & Winston, 1987; Schaefer & Olson, 1981; Gilbert, 1976).

The question of how the complex amalgamation of factors mentioned above mediates the impact of self-disclosure on relationship satisfaction holds particular meaning when considering negative disclosures within committed, long-term relationships. Whereas it may be possible (and advisable) to avoid negative disclosure at the earliest stages of acquaintance and relationship formation, negative feelings inevitably arise and need to be expressed over the course of a long-term relationship. Although most evidence indicates that negative disclosures are less conducive to satisfaction than positive ones, there is some indication that being able to disclose tensions, problems, and hurt feelings is an important part of intimacy and marital satisfaction (Burke et al., 1976; L'Abate & L'Abate, 1979). Furthermore,

realistically, since negative feelings and thoughts -- about life, about oneself, about one's spouse -- are bound to arise and press for expression, one must ask how such feelings and thoughts might optimally be shared.

In trying to define and describe the question of "qualitative differences in approach to negative disclosure," the reasons for insufficient research in this area become increasingly apparent. As already suggested, such qualitative differences in ways of disclosing negative information probably include some combination of such factors as "mode of presentation," "ability to judge the suitability of circumstances," and "sensitivity to the needs and vulnerabilities of the recipient." These kinds of variables -- and the whole question of how people make decisions about what to disclose and how to disclose it -- do not lend themselves to neat empirical study, particularly if one recognizes that what distinguishes a "successful" negative disclosure from an "unsuccessful" one may be some complicated combination of such "sensitivity" factors on the part of the discloser.

Since negative disclosures are inevitable within such long-term relationships as marriage, and, since research has demonstrated the potentially damaging effects of such disclosures on relationships, it seems important to try to clarify which qualitative factors (or combination of factors) in approaching negative disclosure are associated with greater degrees of satisfaction. In other words, is

there a qualitative difference -- in terms of what is disclosed and how it is disclosed -- in how negative self-disclosures are handled by satisfied versus dissatisfied married couples? Such an exploration would most effectively be accomplished within the loose structure of an interview in order to allow for the natural emergence of important aspects of negative self-disclosing behavior within marriage; the next chapter more clearly describes how this might be approached in this study.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND STATEMENT OF QUESTIONS

The present research attempts to expand the current findings on the relationship between negative self-disclosure and marital satisfaction in two basic ways: 1) by broadening and refining the concept of negative disclosure, and 2) by exploring qualitative differences in the ways people handle these types of disclosures within their marriages.

*I. Quantitative Examination of Types of Negative Disclosures* As detailed in the preceding section, the existing literature -- if it addresses the issue of valence at all -- focuses on comparing positive to negative disclosures and rests with the relatively unsurprising conclusion that positive disclosures correlate more strongly with relationship satisfaction than negative ones. Those who have failed to distinguish between variant forms of negative disclosures have neglected the multifaceted nature of this significant variable, and have overlooked the possibility that distinct forms of negative disclosure may impact the relationship in different ways.

After a close examination of the literature, the author posits the existence of three distinct categories of negative disclosure: 1) *General Negative Disclosure (GND)* -- disclosures of negative thoughts or feelings which are not specifically self-critical in nature and which do not imply

a criticism of the recipient/spouse, 2) *Negative Self-Reference (NSR)* -- disclosures which are self-critical in nature and reflect negative feelings, thoughts, or attitudes about the self, and 3) *Criticisms / Negative Disclosures about the Spouse (CRS)* -- disclosures of negative or critical feelings, thoughts, or attitudes about the recipient/spouse.

The first phase of the research tests whether there is a significant difference in the frequency of each of these three types of negative disclosure between more and less satisfied couples. It also examines whether the proportion of each of these three components differs between the two groups. The proportion of each component is obtained by dividing the frequency of that component by the total frequency of negative self-disclosure (collapsed across the three categories). The examination of proportion provides information about how negative disclosures are distributed among the three categories. This, to some degree, controls for differences in total overall amounts of negative self-disclosure; one could imagine, for example, that although certain couples might exhibit less negative disclosures overall, they might concentrate the greater proportion of their negative disclosures in a particular subcategory. An elaboration of issues relating to the first research question are included in the "Hypotheses" section.

*II. Qualitative Exploration of Style of Negative Self-Disclosure*      Although the issue of qualitative differences

in approach to self-disclosure has been raised in most writing in this field, it has not been studied directly. Many researchers have made general statements about the complex array of factors which may mediate the effects of self-disclosure on relationship satisfaction; they have presumed that "successful" disclosers (ie. disclosers who are rated as likable and whose relationships are rated "satisfied") exhibit such characteristics as the capacity to judge situations which do and do not warrant disclosures and demonstrate greater sensitivity to the recipient's feelings and to issues of timing and mode of presentation.

The importance of examining such factors directly is intensified when considering negative disclosures within marriage. Given the potentially damaging effects of these kinds of disclosures -- and the inevitability of the urge to express various sorts of negative thoughts and feelings in a long-term relationship -- it becomes particularly important to clarify which qualitative factors (or combination of factors) in approaching negative disclosure are associated with greater degrees of satisfaction.

The second phase of the research explores qualitative differences in the handling of negative disclosures within marriage by examining how decisions are made about which negative thoughts and feelings should be shared and, if they are shared, about how this is done. Comparisons are made between more and less satisfied couples.

## SUBJECTS

**Recruitment** Subjects were recruited from a pool of 250 middle school and high school teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, school psychologists and social workers at two schools in a community in a suburb of New York City. The rationale for this subject pool came primarily from the fact that the author had an opportunity to approach adult subjects within this school district, and from the fact that, by limiting the subject pool to members of this community of professionals, the educational and employment background of subjects could be controlled; variations in disclosure patterns, therefore, could not be attributed to differences in level of education or type of employment.

The experimenter introduced herself to the faculties of the two schools at four separate staff meetings -- one at the middle school and three at the high school (whose staff is divided into three "houses"). This brief presentation allowed potential subjects to "meet" the experimenter and provided information about the nature of the study. Further details about the recruitment process are provided in the "Procedure" section.

**The gender issue** In order to focus directly on the research questions, without introducing the potentially powerful issue of gender differences in self-disclosure, the sample utilized for the testing of hypotheses included only women. Men were not excluded from the recruitment process, however, since there had been an initial interest in

obtaining an "anecdotal" sample of male subjects. There were 5 male and 32 female volunteers, reflecting response rates of approximately 5% and 20% respectively.

*Demographic characteristics* The research sample consisted of 28 female subjects; four of the original 32 subjects were excluded from the analyses because marital satisfaction data were missing from their husbands.

Tables 1 and 2 provide summary statistics on the subjects' demographic characteristics. As can be seen, the sample was primarily white (85.7%). Ages ranged from 23 to 62, with a mean age of 44.5 and with most subjects over 40 (67.8%). Subjects were married an average of 18.2 years, with 71.5% married at least 10 years. Most couples had children (75%); of those who did, 57.1% had children over 18. Approximately one third (35.7%) of subjects indicated having had some therapy; only five husbands (17.9%) had had any therapy, and only four couples had had any marital therapy. Closer investigation, however, revealed that many of these therapeutic experiences were relatively brief; only four subjects, one husband, and one couple had had more than 6 months of therapy (14.3%, 3.57% & 3.57% respectively).

TABLE 1

MEANS, ST. DEVIATIONS AND MEDIANS FOR DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>St. Dev.</u>	<u>Median</u>
<u>AGE</u>	44.536	11.341	47
<u>YRS. MARRIED</u>	18.179	12.475	21

TABLE 2FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES FOR DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
<u>AGE</u>		
-- Under 30	4	14.3%
-- 30-39	5	17.8%
-- 40-49	10	35.7%
-- 50 +	9	32.1%
<u>RACE</u>		
-- White	24	85.7%
-- Black	4	14.3%
<u>YEARS MARRIED</u>		
-- Under 10 years	8	28.6%
-- 10-25 years	12	42.9%
-- 25 + years	8	28.6%
<u>CHILDREN</u>		
-- None	7	25%
-- 1 or more	21	75%
<u>CHILDREN/AGE</u>		
-- Under 18	9	42.9%
-- 18 +	12	57.1%
<u>THERAPY - SELF</u>		
-- None	18	64.3%
-- Some	10	35.7%
<u>THERAPY - SPOUSE</u>		
-- None	23	82.1%
-- Some	5	17.9%
<u>MARRIAGE THERAPY</u>		
-- None	24	85.7%
-- Some	4	14.3%
<u>EDUCATION - SUBJECT</u>		
-- At least a B.A.	27	96.4%
-- At least an M.A.	22	78.6%
<u>EDUCATION - SPOUSE</u>		
-- At least a B.A.	25	89.3%
-- At least an M.A.	15	53.6%

As noted previously, the educational and employment

backgrounds of subjects were quite uniform -- and comparable to that of their husbands. All but one subject had a college degree, with 78.6% having at least a master's level of education; all but three husbands had bachelor's degrees, with 53.6% of them achieving a masters or higher. The similarity in husband/wife educational and employment background, and the fact that all subjects were members of dual career marriages provided another useful control, especially given that studies have shown greater equity of self-disclosure and higher levels of disclosure in dual career marriages and in marriages between more educated partners (Rosenfeld & Welsh, 1985; Komarovsky, 1967).

#### MATERIALS

##### Demographic Information Survey (See Appendix A).

Subjects were asked to provide information about their age, race, number of years married and number of children. They were also asked to list their occupation and educational level and those of their spouse.

##### The Negative Self-Disclosure Survey (NSDS) (See Appendix B)

Designed specifically for this study, this instrument consists of a series of hypothetical scenarios involving negative disclosures. Using a five-point Likert scale, with "1" indicating "Very Unlikely" and "5" indicating "Very Likely," subjects indicated the degree to which they would be likely or unlikely to disclose in a similar situation.

*The scenarios* Twenty-four negative self-disclosure scenarios were presented to each subject. The scenarios represent three categories, with eight scenarios in each category. The categories reflect the three types of negative disclosure discussed in the literature review and in the introduction to this chapter. The criteria used for category assignment were as follows:

1) General Negative Disclosure (GND) = Disclosures involving negative thoughts or feelings which are not specifically self-critical in nature and which do not imply a criticism of one's spouse or people or things closely connected with him. (Eg. Feelings of frustration or disappointment with certain life experiences, social issues or people who are not intimately connected to one's spouse).

2) Negative Self-Reference (NSR) = Disclosures which are self-critical in nature and reflect negative feelings, thoughts, or attitudes about oneself. (Eg. Feelings or thoughts of failure, embarrassment, or inadequacy).

3) Criticism of Spouse (CRS) = Disclosures of negative or critical feelings, thoughts, or attitudes about one's spouse. (Eg. Feelings of frustration, annoyance, disappointment, etc. with one's spouse. Feelings or thoughts associated with incidents in which the subject felt angered, hurt, or displeased with her spouse).

A test of inter-rater reliability was performed to assure agreement on the categorization of the scenarios. Twenty-two school teachers were given the criteria described above and asked to place each of thirty-three scenarios into one of the three categories. Only items which achieved at least an 82% (18/22) agreement rate were included in the final survey.

Alterations in the wording of certain scenarios, in the presentation of items on the page, and in the specificity of typed directions were made in the NSDS after a five-subject pilot study revealed minor problems and misunderstandings arising at various points on the original instrument. The final instrument, as used in the study, presented items and directions much more clearly, repeatedly reminded subjects of the hypothetical nature of the scenarios, and allowed them greater flexibility in choosing a response because only the two endpoints of the Likert scale were labeled.

***Rationale for scenarios*** The rationale for using set scenarios rather than asking subjects to report on actual circumstances of negative disclosure within their marriages rests on several beliefs. 1) It is very difficult for people to respond to open-ended questions about negative disclosure in their marriages; responses given usually feel forced and are not particularly representative of significant incidences of negative disclosure. Informal pilot testing supported this belief as subjects had difficulty recalling events and produced vague and confusing answers. 2) Questions about actual negative disclosures and their outcome are overly threatening and present the confounding issue that someone who is comfortable telling a stranger (ie. the experimenter) of such situations may simply be more likely in general to share such negative information. 3) Set scenarios allow for more more easily standardized and comparable data. Equal numbers of each

type of negative disclosure are assured and subjects respond to situations of equally negative magnitude.

The scenarios function in a similar manner to role-play situations used in therapy and to such projective testing techniques as the TAT. The subject's spontaneous response to a hypothetical, but somewhat realistic, situation provides information about how she makes decisions and how she would be likely to behave under certain circumstances. As with role-plays and TAT stories, individual variations in response emerge and reflect basic internal differences between people -- in outlook, sensitivity, decision-making, etc.

The Negative Self-Disclosure Interview (See Appendix C). Using the 24 scenarios from the NSDS as a springboard for discussion, the interview explored a subject's rationale for disclosing or not disclosing (or for placing herself at a particular point on the scale) and, for items about which she had exhibited some likelihood to disclose, asked her to elaborate on her mode of disclosure. Inquiries about circumstances that might influence her decision to disclose/not disclose and about possible outcomes were also included. At the end of the interview, subjects were given the opportunity to describe an actual incident of negative disclosure in their marriage and to reflect on whether there were times when their decisions to share/not share had gone against their better judgment. They were also asked whether there were types of negative self-disclosure that they could

not imagine sharing with their spouse; they were not pressed for elaboration since such things clearly would not be easily shared with anyone.

Constraints in terms of time and subject patience necessitated limiting inquiry to between 8 and 10 scenarios. For all subjects, the interview began with inquiry about #11, a relatively benign scenario about running into an acquaintance who has detained and annoyed you. This was done to standardize their introduction to the interview process in a non-threatening manner. Although question numbers 9 and 20 were asked of nearly everyone because they had proved interesting during the pilot study, they were generally asked toward the end of the interview due to their more sensitive sexual nature. Beyond those three items, scenarios were selected for inquiry either if a subject's response had deviated from other items or if there were some other indication that it would generate interesting discussion. As noted, the purpose of the interview phase of the research was to explore how individuals decide whether or not to share certain negative thoughts and feelings with their spouses and, if they do share them, how they go about doing it. This over-arching purpose guided the shape of the interviews.

The Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS) (See Appendix D). The Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS), designed by Roach et al. (1981), consists of 24 statements of feelings or attitudes about one's spouse and/or marriage; subjects use a

5-point Likert scale to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements listed. Items are scored so that higher numbers indicate greater degrees of satisfaction with one's marital relationship. Both subjects (wives) and their husbands completed this scale.

In developing and researching the MSS, Roach et al. (1981) found that the instrument had very high internal consistency, sufficient test-retest reliability and validity, and a low degree of contamination with social desirability. The original scale, which contained 73 items, was shortened to include the 24 items with the highest item-whole score correlations; the 24-item MSS, as used in this study, has been used widely and achieved similar results to the parent scale (Roach, 1991, personal communication).

The author embedded six additional items into the scale in order to explore issues involving satisfaction with disclosure within the marriage. These items (#4, #8, #12, #16, #20, and #24) are not used in the official scoring of "marital satisfaction" since they are not a part of the standardized scale as devised by Roach et al. (1981); they do, however, generate some interesting supplementary findings which shed some light on ways in which husbands and wives view negative self-disclosure within marriage.

***Rationale for selecting the MSS*** A marital satisfaction scale, rather than one of the more frequently used marital adjustment scales (eg. The Locke-Wallace (1959) or the Spanier Dyadic Adjustment Scale (1976)), was chosen

after consulting an extensive review of the literature in this area (Sabatelli, 1988). The decision was made for three reasons: 1) The concept of adjustment typically has been used to refer to the processes that are presumed to be important in achieving a functional marital relationship. Adjustment scales generally focus on ways in which husbands and wives accommodate (or not) to one another. Certain assumptions about the importance of open communication are made in defining adjustment; in a study which directly addresses the issue of whether certain kinds of open communication are conducive to marital happiness, such a scale would be inappropriate. 2) Satisfaction, which refers to a person's attitudes toward his or her partner or the marriage, more precisely assesses an aspect of the relationship which the author believes would be influenced by self-disclosing behavior; the study proposes that one's attitudes towards one's partner and marriage bear some relation to the kinds of negative thoughts and feelings that are shared and to the manner in which they are shared. 3) The unit of analysis in adjustment scales is the dyad, whereas in satisfaction scales, the individual's attitudes or feelings are given primary importance. A satisfaction scale such as the MSS, therefore, allows for a separate examination of each partner's attitudes about the relationship.

## PROCEDURE

**Recruitment** As noted previously, the author introduced herself to the faculties of the two schools at four separate staff meetings -- one at the middle school and three at the high school (whose staff is divided into three "houses"). During these brief presentations, potential subjects "met" the experimenter, learned about the nature of the study, and heard what participation in it would entail. Potential subjects were told that they would find an information sheet and demographic survey in their mailboxes and that they should indicate their willingness to participate by filling out the survey and placing it in the "Research Project" box, clearly visible in their mail room.

Appendix E contains the information/introduction sheet referred to above. It was placed in the mailboxes of all school staff members, along with the demographic survey (Appendix A). This gave potential subjects another opportunity to review the information regarding participation in the study and gave them the opportunity to sign up anonymously -- rather than publicly at the meeting.

As can be seen in Appendix E, potential subjects were told that the study's focus was an exploration of the ways in which married individuals handle various aspects of communication with their spouses. Confidentiality was assured and subjects were informed that hypothetical

scenarios would be used to generate discussion; it was hoped that this would help to lower people's anxiety about having to reveal overly personal information. People were told that meeting times would be arranged at school, at their convenience, and that \$10 would be donated to the school fund in their name. Subjects were also told that they would receive the final results of the study and that they would probably find the experience of participating interesting and thought-provoking in that it would provide an opportunity for them to reflect about the ways in which they think about and talk about various issues within their marriages. Debriefing phone calls revealed that most subjects had in fact found it an interesting and valuable experience.

*Subject contact*        The experimenter called people who had indicated a willingness to participate and arranged a convenient meeting time. Subjects were called once more, the night before, in order to confirm plans. Most meetings took place in the subject's office or room; the average amount of time spent with each person was 50 minutes.

Upon first meeting subjects, the experimenter chatted briefly, thanked them for their participation and gave them the school fund check and acknowledgment card<sup>1</sup>. She then

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1. Each \$10 check, made out to the school fund, was accompanied by a card noting that the money was being donated in the name of the subject in thanks for her participation in the experimenter's dissertation research project.

gave them an overview of what would be done during the next 40-50 minutes (the questionnaire and interview), reminded them that they would be taking a brief questionnaire home (one for them and one for their spouse), assured them of the confidentiality of their responses, and asked them to sign a standard letter of consent (Appendix F).

***The Negative Self-Disclosure Survey (NSDS)*** After being reminded that the study sought to explore different styles of communication within marriage, subjects were presented with the NSDS and told that each of the 24 items featured situations and accompanying thoughts and feelings that might arise in the course of a marriage. They were urged to imagine themselves in each of the given situations -- experiencing the thoughts and feelings described; in each case they were to determine, on a scale from 1 to 5, how likely or unlikely they thought they would be to share the given thoughts and feelings with their spouse. They were reminded that there were no "right" or "wrong" answers to these questions and that they should in each case answer in a manner that was true to their nature and that of their relationship -- even if the specifics of a given scenario had not occurred in actuality.

***The Negative Self-Disclosure Interview*** As indicated above in the "Materials" section, the experimenter used subject's responses to the NSDS as a springboard for discussion about the individual's rationale for disclosing or not disclosing and as a means of exploring the subject's

proposed mode of disclosure. Appendix C outlines the general way in which questions were asked of subjects; the "Materials" section above further details the way in which items were selected for exploration.

Overall, the structure of this phase was left loose enough to put subjects at ease and allow them room for reflection and personal anecdotes. This format allowed the experimenter to gain a general sense of an individual's approach to negative self-disclosure within her marriage -- both in terms of how she decides what should be shared, and how she actually shares various thoughts and feelings.

*Distribution of "Take-Home" Materials -- Parting*

**Comments.** Subjects were given two envelopes to take home -- one for them and one for their husband. Individual names were written on each to avoid confusion. The subject's envelope contained the Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS) and a stamped envelope addressed to the experimenter; the husband's envelope contained a letter of introduction/explanation and assurance of confidentiality (Appendix G), a letter of consent (Appendix H), the MSS, and a stamped envelope addressed to the experimenter. Both subjects and their husbands were instructed to complete and return their questionnaires independently; the importance of this for research design was stressed. Subjects and spouses were encouraged to call if any questions or concerns should arise; they were also told that the experimenter would initiate a brief "follow-up" call after receiving all

research materials. After concluding her contact with a subject, the experimenter wrote a brief "clinical description" of the individual; this was done as a way of recording interesting details and impressions about a person which would not be encompassed by the other data being collected.

*"Thank You" and Debriefing Contacts* After receiving all materials (MSSs from both partners), the experimenter sent all subject pairs a "Thank You/Debriefing" letter (Appendix I). The letter thanked both partners for their participation and explained in more detail the purpose of the study. It reminded subjects that they would receive a summary of the results of the study at the conclusion of the project, and that they should feel free to contact the experimenter at any time with questions, concerns, or comments.

Approximately two weeks after sending out the "Thank You" letter, the experimenter called subjects in order to give them an opportunity to share any thoughts, feelings, questions or concerns that might have arisen during the course of their experience as participants in the study. Questions posed to them included the following: "What was it like for you to participate? Was there any aspect that was stressful? Is there any aspect of your experience as a subject that you would like to talk about? Do you have any questions?"

## HYPOTHESES

### *I. Quantitative Examination of Types of Negative*

**Disclosure**        Since the existing self-disclosure literature suggests the detrimental effects of negative disclosures on relationship development and maintenance, the first hypothesis states that, overall, when collapsed across the three categories, a tendency toward greater frequency<sup>2</sup> of negative disclosure will be evident in less satisfied couples as compared to more satisfied couples.<sup>3</sup> More specifically, Total Negative Disclosures (TNDs -- all 24 NSDS items) will be greater for subjects whose marriages are rated less satisfying than for subjects whose marriages are rated more satisfying.

**HYP - 1: Total Negative Disclosures** (TND - all 24 NSDS items collapsed across the three categories) **will be greater for less satisfied than for more satisfied**

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2.

For ease of discussion, "frequency" of negative disclosure will be understood to mean the stated degree of likelihood to disclose noted by female subjects on the Negative Self-Disclosure Survey (NSDS).

3.

Since MSS scores are available for both subjects (wives) and their husbands, three determinations of degree of marital satisfaction can be obtained -- resulting in the possibility of testing the hypotheses three times: 1) using the combined MSS rating (wife and husband), 2) using the wife's MSS rating, and 3) using the husband's MSS rating. In order to simplify the statement of hypotheses, however, the word "couple" will be used to encompass all three possibilities. Also, reference is made to "more" versus "less" satisfied couples; this is done to avoid the more misleading dichotomy between "satisfied" and "dissatisfied." Further discussion of these issues appears in Chapter IV.

*couples.*

The next two sets of hypotheses move beyond this general question to explore the differential effects of the three subcategories of negative disclosure. The first proposes that the frequency of negative disclosures in each of the three categories will differ significantly between more and less satisfied couples. In other words, a) the frequency of General Negative Disclosures (GND) for more satisfied couples will differ from the frequency of GND for less satisfied couples; b) the frequency of Negative Self-References (NSR) for more satisfied couples will differ from the frequency of NSR for less satisfied couples; and c) the frequency of Criticisms of Spouse (CRS) for more satisfied couples will differ from the frequency of CRS for less satisfied couples:

*HYP - 2: there will be a significant difference between more and less satisfied couples in terms of the*  
*a) frequency of General Negative Disclosures (GND)*  
*b) frequency of Negative Self-References (NSR)*  
*c) frequency of Criticisms of Spouse (CRS)*

The final set of hypotheses further proposes that the proportion of negative disclosures in each category will differ significantly between more and less satisfied couples.<sup>4</sup> In other words, a) the proportion of General Negative Disclosures (GND) for more satisfied couples will

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 4.

Proportion is calculated by dividing the score of a particular subcategory by the Total Negative Disclosures: eg. CRS/TND.

differ from the proportion of GND for less satisfied couples; b) the proportion of Negative Self-References (NSR) for more satisfied couples will differ from the proportion of NSR for less satisfied couples; and c) the proportion of Criticisms of Spouse (CRS) for more satisfied couples will differ from the proportion of CRS for less satisfied couples:

***HYP - 3: There will be a significant difference between more and less satisfied couples in terms of the***  
***a) proportion of General Negative Disclosure (GND)***  
***b) proportion of Negative Self-References (NSR)***  
***c) proportion of Criticisms of Spouse (CRS)***

In the last two groups of hypotheses discussed above, predictions are not offered about the direction that the differences might take; this open-ended approach allows for the possibility that each subcategory might have a distinct relationship with the marital satisfaction variable. Examining the subcategories separately has the potential for greatly expanding our understanding of how different types of disclosures influence the marital relationship. If one type of negative self-disclosure were more frequent in more satisfied marriages than in less satisfied marriages, for example, it might suggest that certain forms of negative disclosure promote, or at least reflect, a healthy marital relationship.

## **II. Qualitative Exploration of Style of Negative**

**Disclosure.** Due to the exploratory, qualitative nature of the second research question, a set of guiding premises, rather than specific, quantifiable hypotheses, will be used to direct the examination of interview data. It is hoped that this looser structure will allow important aspects of negative self-disclosing behavior within marriage to emerge more meaningfully.

Overall, it is hypothesized that *there will be a difference in the general approach to negative disclosures exhibited by women who are members of more satisfied marriages as compared to women who are members of less satisfied marriages.* These differences are expected to manifest themselves in the following areas: a) how decisions are made about what should and should not be disclosed (ie. stated purpose of disclosure and circumstances cited as important in deciding what should be shared), and b) how negative thoughts and feelings are actually shared (ie. mode of disclosure).

Generally speaking, it is expected that wives in more satisfied marriages would demonstrate a greater degree of concern for the relationship and more sensitivity to the needs and/or vulnerabilities of their spouses, both in their rationales for disclosing (or not disclosing), and in the actual way in which they choose to convey negative thoughts and feelings. Members of less satisfied couples would be

expected to reflect more self-centeredness, both in their rationales for disclosure and in their mode of disclosing (eg. "I disclosed because I was angry at him or in a bad mood, vs. "...because I thought it could improve our relationship.").

Members of more satisfied marriages would be expected to exhibit a certain thoughtfulness or careful quality in their decision-making process and in their mode of disclosure -- an awareness of important underlying circumstances and timing, and an expectation of positive outcome, both in terms of partner's response and in terms of the relationship. Clearer rationales for their decisions regarding negative disclosure would also be expected in this group, rather than vague, emotionally-driven responses. The virtual uniformity of educational and employment background in this sample should eliminate the potential confounding variable of differences in capacity for articulation and verbal expression.

In conclusion, the hypotheses discussed above share one general premise: *"It is not how negative you are, but how you are negative!"* In other words, the way in which a person shares negative thoughts and feelings -- both in terms of which types are emphasized, and in terms of the actual manner of disclosing and making decisions regarding negative disclosures -- may have more to do with relationship satisfaction than sheer amount of negative

disclosure. An understanding of these finer details of negative disclosure would improve greatly a clinician's capacity to assist couples in navigating this tricky area of self-disclosure and would allow him or her to target particularly crucial areas for therapeutic intervention.

IV. RESULTS FOR THE QUANTITATIVE DATA

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSES OF INSTRUMENTS

*The Negative Self-Disclosure Scale (NSDS)*

*Overview of subject responses* Table 3 summarizes the ranges, means, standard deviations, and medians for all 28 subjects' scores for Total Negative Disclosure (TND), General Negative Disclosure (GND), Negative Self-Reference (NSR), and Criticism of Spouse (CRS). Appendix J provides the frequencies and percentages of responses at each Likert scale point for each item of the NSDS for the entire 28-subject sample.

TABLE 3

SUMMARY STATISTICS FOR NSDS SCORES FOR ALL 28 SUBJECTS

	<u>Range</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>St. Dev.</u>	<u>Median</u>
<u>TND (all 24 items)</u>	84-120	103.500	8.821	105.500
<u>GND (8 items)</u>	31-40	35.929	2.968	36.000
<u>NSR (8 items)</u>	24-40	32.857	4.275	33.000
<u>CRS (8 items)</u>	23-40	34.714	4.697	36.500

As can be seen, the mean for Total Negative Disclosures (TND) for the subject group was 103.5, while those for the GND, NSR, and CRS subcategories were 35.929, 32.857, and 34.714 respectively. When one recalls that the potential range of scores for all 24 items is 24-120 (since each item could range from 1 to 5), and that the potential range of scores for each of the subcategories is 8-40, the relatively

high disclosing nature of these subjects becomes apparent.

Taken as a whole, then, these subjects indicate a high degree of likeliness to disclose negative thoughts and feelings of a variety of types -- with GND disclosures as most likely of the three subtypes, and NSR as least likely. A repeated measures ANOVA showed the difference between the subcategory means for all 28 subjects to be significant ( $MS=69.0$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $F=5.80$ ,  $p<.01$ ); this suggests, then, that, overall, subjects are more reluctant to share negative thoughts and feelings about themselves (NSR) than about their spouse (CRS) or other general topics (GND).

**Reliability** Using Cronbach's alpha as a measure of internal consistency, reliability analyses were done on the NSDS as a whole and for each of the subcategories. All 24 items had an alpha of .798, whereas the GND, NSR, and CRS subcategories had alphas of .488, .671, and .849 respectively. These numbers suggest that the instrument as a whole has good internal consistency, with the strongest reliability occurring in the CRS category and the weakest in the GND category. The relative weakness of the GND category is not surprising, given that general negative disclosures, by definition, incorporate a broader range of negative thoughts and feelings than do the other two subcategories, which more specifically include negative thoughts or feelings about oneself and one's spouse, respectively.

**The Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS) Overview of subject responses** Table 4 summarizes the ranges, means,

standard deviations, and medians for all 28 subjects and for their spouses, on the 24-item Marital Satisfaction Scale. Appendices K and L provide the frequencies and percentages of responses at each Likert scale point for each item of the MSS for the 28 subjects and for their spouses.

TABLE 4  
SUMMARY STATISTICS FOR MSS SCORES  
FOR ALL 28 SUBJECTS AND THEIR SPOUSES

	<u>Range</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>St. Dev.</u>	<u>Median</u>
<u>Subject MSS</u>	56-120	101.893	18.201	109.000
<u>Spouse MSS</u>	61-120	100.857	16.821	106.000

Once again, when considering that the potential range for the 24-item MSS is 24-120 (since each item response ranges from 1 to 5), the relatively high satisfaction ratings of this sample become apparent. It is important to note, however, that inflation of scores is extremely common in satisfaction scales in general (Roach, 1991, personal communication). In one of the studies done on the original instrument -- using 88 subjects of comparable background to those in this study (a non-clinical sample comprised primarily (80%) of professionals in education), Roach et al. (1981) found that 80% of the sample obtained an average individual item score of 3.5 or above (on a scale from 1 to 5). For the female subjects in this sample, 75% scored in that range; for the spouses, 82% were in that range. As shall be seen then, a distinction between "more" and "less" satisfied subjects is more realistic and meaningful than

attempting to divide subjects into strict categories of "satisfied" and "dissatisfied" based on the midpoint of the Likert scale.

**Reliability** The internal consistency of the MSS was found to be very high, both for subjects and their spouses, with alpha scores of .969 and .960 respectively. This parallels Roach et. al's (1981) findings in a number of studies on this instrument (.982, .970, and .971 on the 73-item, the 70-item and the 50-item versions of the scale respectively.)

**Definition of Satisfaction Categories** A median split was used to define the categories of "more" and "less" satisfied. This was done three times: using a combination of husband and wife marital satisfaction scores, using the wives' scores alone, and using the husbands' scores alone. The 14 couples with combined MSS scores ranging from 134 to 217 were placed in the "less satisfied" category, while the other half of the couples with scores between 218 and 240 were placed in the "more satisfied" category. The 13 female subjects with MSS scores ranging from 56 to 106 were placed in the "less satisfied" category, while the 15 female subjects with MSS scores ranging from 109 to 120 were placed in the "more satisfied" category; two subjects had a score of 109, so, rather than splitting them up, both were placed in the "more satisfied" category. The 14 husbands with scores between 61 and 105 were placed in the "less satisfied" category, while the other half of them, with

scores between 107 and 120 -- were placed in the "more satisfied" category. As noted earlier, hypotheses were tested three times, using the three aforementioned ratings of the degree of satisfaction in the marriage.

### ANALYSIS OF HYPOTHESES

#### *Using Couple Combined MSS as Definition of Satisfaction*

A series of t-tests was used to test hypotheses 1, 2abc, and 3abc (see pp. 44-45). Tables 5A-5G, found in Appendix M, contain the tables used to display the results of each t-test.

As can be seen, no support was found for HYP-1; in other words, rather than finding that Total Negative Disclosures (TNDs) were greater for women in couples whose joint MSS ratings defined them as less satisfied than for those in couples whose joint ratings defined them as more satisfied, no significant difference between the two groups was found when comparing subject means for TND [ $t=-.68$ ,  $df=26$ , NS].

Similarly, no support was found for any of the three hypotheses 2a, 2b, or 2c. That is, a) there was no significant difference between the means for subjects' General Negative Disclosures (GNDs) when comparing the more and less satisfied groups (as defined here by the couples' joint MSS ratings) [ $t=.76$ ,  $df=26$ , NS]; b) there was no

significant difference between the two groups when comparing subjects' means for Negative Self-Reference (NSR) [ $t = -.79$ ,  $df = 26$ , NS]; and c) there was no significant difference between the two groups when comparing subjects' means for Criticism of Spouse (CRS) [ $t = -1.02$ ,  $df = 26$ , NS].

As was the case for hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c, no support was found for any of the three hypotheses, 3a, 3b, or 3c. That is, a) there was no significant difference between the proportions of subjects' GNDs when comparing the more and less satisfied groups (still defined here by the couple's joint MSS rating) [ $t = 1.73$ ,  $df = 26$ , NS]; there was no difference between the proportions of subjects' NSRs when comparing the two groups [ $t = -.59$ ,  $df = 26$ , NS]; and c) there was no difference between the proportions of subjects' CRSs when comparing the two groups [ $t = -.98$ ,  $df = 26$ , NS].

To summarize, then, women in more satisfied marriages and women in less satisfied marriages (ie. women who were members of couples whose joint MSS ratings defined them as either more or less satisfied) appeared to exhibit the same degree of likelihood to disclose negative thoughts and feelings; this finding was true when all three types of negative self-disclosure were combined (IND), when each of the subtypes was compared separately, and when the proportions of each of the subtypes were compared.

Using Subject MSS as Definition of Satisfaction

As was the case in the analyses based on the couple's combined MSS, a series of t-tests was used to test hypotheses 1, 2abc, and 3abc (see pp. 44-45). Tables 6A-6G, found in Appendix N, contain the tables used to display the results of each t-test.

Once again, no support was found for HYP-1; rather than finding that Total Negative Disclosures (TND) were greater for women who rated themselves as less satisfied than for those who rated themselves as more satisfied, no significant difference between the two groups was found when comparing subject means for TND [ $t=-.49$ ,  $df=26$ , NS].

Similarly, no support was found for any of the three hypotheses 2a, 2b, or 2c. That is, a) there was no difference between women who rated themselves as more satisfied and those who rated themselves as less satisfied when comparing their means for General Negative Disclosure (GND) [ $t=.24$ ,  $df=26$ , NS]; b) there was no significant difference between the two groups when comparing these subjects' means for Negative Self-Reference (NSR) [ $t=-.36$ ,  $df=26$ , NS]; and c) there was no significant difference between the two groups when comparing means for Criticism of Spouse (CRS) [ $t=-.74$ ,  $df=26$ , NS].

In addition, no support was found for hypothesis 3a, 3b, or 3c. That is, a) there was no significant difference in the proportions of GND for women who rated themselves as more satisfied and those who rated themselves as less

satisfied [ $t=.90$ ,  $df=26$ , NS]; b) there was no significant difference between the two groups when comparing their proportion of Negative Self-Reference (NSR) [ $t=-.10$ ,  $df=26$ , NS]; and c) there was no significant difference between the two groups when comparing their proportion of Criticism of Spouse (CRS) [ $t=-.71$ ,  $df=26$ , NS].

To summarize, then, women who rated themselves as more satisfied with their marriages and women who rated themselves as less satisfied with their marriages appeared to exhibit the same degree of likeliness to disclose negative thoughts and feelings. As was the case when using the couple's joint MSS rating to define more and less satisfied, this finding was true when all three types of negative self-disclosure were taken together (TND), when each of the subtypes was compared separately, and when the proportions of each of the subtypes were compared.

#### Using Spouse MSS as Definition of Satisfaction

As in the previous two cases, a series of t-tests was used to test hypotheses 1, 2abc, and 3abc (see pp. 44-45), this time using the husbands' MSS scores to define the two groups of "more" and "less" satisfied. Tables 7A-7G, in Appendix D, contain the tables used to display the result of each t-test.

As can be seen, HYP-1 was not supported. Although the subject means for Total Negative Disclosures (TNDs) did not differ significantly between the two groups [ $t=-1.99$ ,  $df=26$ ,

NS], a closer look at Table 7A in Appendix O demonstrates a trend that is opposite to what was predicted. Husbands who rated themselves as more satisfied with their marriages had wives with a IND mean of 106.64, whereas husbands who rated themselves as less satisfied had wives with a IND mean of 100.36. The difference between the two, although not significant at .05, was significant at .058. This suggests that perhaps with a larger number of subjects one would have found, contrary to what was predicted by the literature and by Hypothesis-1, that Total Negative Disclosures (IND) are greater among wives with more satisfied husbands than they are for wives with less satisfied husbands.

HYP-2a and HYP-2b were not supported; in other words, there was no significant difference between the means for General Negative Disclosure (GND) for women whose husbands rated themselves as more satisfied and those whose husbands rated themselves as less satisfied [ $t=-.13$ ,  $df=26$ , NS]; and b) there was no significant difference between the means for Negative Self-Reference (NSR) in the two groups [ $t=-1.16$ ,  $df=26$ , NS].

HYP-2c was supported at the .01 level. As can be seen on Table 7D in Appendix O, the means for Criticism of Spouse (CRS) for women with less satisfied husbands (32.57) and for women with more satisfied husbands (36.86) differed significantly [ $t=-2.68$ ,  $df=26$ ,  $p<.01$ ]. The most interesting aspect of this finding is its unexpected direction: CRS are greater among women whose husbands rate themselves as more

satisfied than among women whose husbands rate themselves as less satisfied. Keep in mind that here the negative disclosures being issued by the wife are about her husband!

HYP-3a was supported at the .05 level. In other words, the proportion of General Negative Disclosures (GNDs) for women with more satisfied husbands differed significantly from the proportion of GNDs for women with less satisfied husbands [ $t=2.16$ ,  $df=26$ ,  $p<.05$ ]. Here, however, there was a greater proportion of GNDs among women with less satisfied husbands than among women with more satisfied husbands.

No support was found for HYP-3b; the difference in proportion between Negative Self-References (NSRs) for women with more satisfied husbands and women with less satisfied husbands was not significant [ $t=.16$ ,  $df=26$ , NS].

HYP-3c was supported at the .05 level [ $t=-2.06$ ,  $df=26$ ,  $p<.05$ ]. Here, in keeping with the finding for HYP-2c, the proportion of Criticisms of Spouse (CRS) was greater among women whose husbands rated themselves as more satisfied than among women whose husbands rated themselves as less satisfied.

In summary, then, when using the husband's ratings of satisfaction with the marriage to distinguish between "more" and "less" satisfied, a number of interesting findings emerge. Although no significant difference in means for IND, GND, or NSR were found between the two groups, CRS (criticisms of spouse) were greater -- both in terms of frequency and proportion -- among women whose spouses rated

their marriages as more satisfying. Although not significant, a trend in this same direction ( $p < .058$ ) occurred for Total Negative Disclosure, with greater amounts among women with more satisfied husbands. The direction of these findings was reversed only for proportion of General Negative Disclosures; here, women with more satisfied husbands exhibited lower proportions of GND than those with less satisfied husbands. It appears, then, that among wives of more satisfied husbands, negative disclosures about the spouse proportionally outweigh general types of negative disclosures, and that these elevated amounts of spouse-critical comments influence the overall level of negative disclosure (as reflected in the higher IND scores). The potential implications of these results, and those described previously, will be discussed and examined in greater depth in the final chapter (Chapter VI).

#### FURTHER ANALYSES

##### *Congruity of Husband and Wife Ratings of the Marriage*

As noted, marital satisfaction data were collected from husbands and wives independently. In order to better understand the degree to which the subject/spouse pairs were in agreement (or disagreement) about the status of their marriages, a number of questions were explored.

***Correlation between husband and wife MSS scores:*** There was a high correlation between husbands' and wives' 24-item MSS scores ( $r = .794$ ,  $p < .001$ ); as can be seen, this

correlation was found to be highly significant.

***Congruity of categorization:*** As described earlier in this chapter, husband and wife MSS scores were rank-ordered independently, with a median split used in each case in order to differentiate between "more" and "less" satisfied individuals. Twenty-three out of twenty-eight couples (82.1%) were "in agreement" about their marital status; in other words, in 23 out of 28 cases, a wife who had an MSS score which defined her as "more" or "less" satisfied, had a husband with an MSS score which placed him in the same category. This finding was highly significant ( $X^2 = 11.63$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

***Congruity of response to individual items on MSS:*** Twenty-four paired t-tests were performed, comparing husbands' and wives' responses to each item of the Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS). No significant difference emerged in 23 out of the 24 items. Husbands and wives differed only on item #2, with husbands indicating that, as a group, they worry more about their marriages than do their wives, [ $t=2.20$ ,  $df=27$ ,  $p<.05$ ].

This group of findings, then, suggests that, generally speaking, the husbands and wives in this sample did not differ in their attitudes and feelings about one another and their marriages.

***A Closer Look at the Six Additional Items*** As noted in the Methodology chapter, six items were embedded in the MSS (#4, #8, #12, #16, #20, and #24 in Appendix D). These

items were designed to record each partner's perceptions about different aspects of how his or her spouse handles negative self-disclosure issues within the context of their relationship. Various explorations involving these items yielded interesting results.

***Congruity of husband/wife responses on the 6 items.***

Similar to the last set of analyses described above, paired t-tests were performed on the 6 items, comparing the ways in which husbands and wives responded to these items. There were significant differences on two out of the six items -- items #12 and #20. For #12, husbands, to a greater degree than wives, felt that their partners tended to say things which would better be left unsaid [ $t=2.29$ ,  $df=27$ ,  $p<.05$ ]. For #20, husbands, to a greater degree than wives, felt that their partners shared too many insecurities with them [ $t=3.81$ ,  $df=27$ ,  $p<.001$ ].

***Relation of the 6 items to marital satisfaction, as defined by wives' responses to the 24-item MSS.*** Six t-tests were done, comparing less satisfied wives to more satisfied wives on their responses to each of the six items. Less satisfied wives rated their husbands significantly lower on four of the six items as compared to more satisfied wives: 1) for item #8, less satisfied wives rated their husbands as being more critical of them [ $t=-3.64$ ,  $df=26$ ,  $p<.001$ ]; 2) for item #12, less satisfied wives to a greater extent felt that their husbands tended to say things which would better be left unsaid [ $t=-3.48$ ,  $df=26$ ,  $p<.01$ ]; 3) for

item #16, less satisfied wives to a greater degree felt that their husbands raised delicate issues in a way that would make them angry, rather than in a way which would allow them to reflect and consider [ $t=-3.50$ ,  $df=26$ ,  $p<.01$ ]; and 4) for item #24, less satisfied wives to a greater extent felt that their husbands shared unpleasant thoughts and feelings with them at times when they felt unable to cope with them effectively [ $t=-3.28$ ,  $df=26$ ,  $p<.01$ ]. More and less satisfied wives did not differ significantly in their responses to #20 or #4, items which asked them to reflect on their feelings about their spouse's sharing of personal insecurities and complaints about life.

***Relation of the 6 items to marital satisfaction, as defined by husbands' responses to the 24-item MSS.*** As above, six t-tests were done, comparing less satisfied husbands to more satisfied husbands on their responses to each of the six items. Less satisfied husbands rated their wives significantly lower on five out of the six items as compared to more satisfied husbands: 1) for item #4, less satisfied husbands to a greater degree felt that their wives spent too much time complaining about things in their lives [ $t=-3.80$ ,  $df=26$ ,  $p<.001$ ]; 2) for item #8, less satisfied husbands to a greater extent felt that their wives were too critical of them [ $t=-3.05$ ,  $df=26$ ,  $p<.01$ ]; 3) for item #16, less satisfied husbands to a greater degree felt that their wives raised delicate issues in a way that would make them angry, rather than in a way which would allow them to

reflect and consider [ $t=-3.00$ ,  $df=26$ ,  $p<.01$ ]; 4) for item #20, less satisfied husbands to a greater extent felt that their wives shared too many insecurities with them [ $t=-3.08$ ,  $df=26$ ,  $p<.01$ ]; 5) for item #24, less satisfied husbands to a greater degree felt that their wives tended to share unpleasant thoughts and feelings with them at times when they felt unable to cope with them effectively [ $t=-2.74$ ,  $df=26$ ,  $p<.01$ ]. More satisfied and less satisfied husbands did not differ on item #12, which asked them to reflect upon the degree to which they felt that their spouses said things which would be better left unsaid.

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The six-items discussed above add important information to the overall picture of the relationship between negative disclosure and marital satisfaction because, with these items, each spouse had the opportunity to comment directly on how he or she thinks and feels, not just about his or her spouse and marriage in general, but specifically about his or her partner's negative disclosing behavior within the context of their relationship.

The fact that more and less satisfied individuals (as measured by the MSS) had significantly different attitudes about many aspects of their spouses' negative disclosing behavior (as measured by the six items) strongly suggests that the ways in which a person handles these types of disclosures has some association with the partner's overall feelings about the relationship. Both women and men who

were less satisfied with their relationships overall, felt, to a greater extent than more satisfied individuals, that their partners handled delicate matters insensitively (in ways that would make them angry), that they shared unpleasant thoughts with them at times when they felt unable to cope with them, and that they were too critical of them.

This last perception is particularly interesting, especially for husbands, since the data indicated that Criticisms of Spouse (CRS) were less among the wives of less satisfied men. The fact that these same less satisfied men perceived their wives as being significantly more critical than did more satisfied men suggests something about the manner or spirit in which these criticisms are issued. Put another way, if more satisfied men have wives who indicate a greater likelihood to criticize them than wives of less satisfied men -- but these same more satisfied men are less likely to complain that their wives are too critical of them (ie. they rate their wives more favorably on this item than do less satisfied husbands), then, it is possible that their wives are criticizing them in a spirit and/or manner that does not negatively impact their feelings about their marriage.

To further explore this question, let us now turn to an examination of the interviews and to some of the more qualitative aspects of negative disclosure within marriage.

## V. FINDINGS ON THE INTERVIEW DATA

The close examination of the interview transcripts of the 28 subjects in this study yielded many interesting and thought-provoking findings. As predicted, certain striking differences emerged between the ways that women in more and less satisfied marriages approach negative self-disclosure within their relationships<sup>1</sup>. These distinctions were most obvious in terms of subjects' rationales for disclosing or not disclosing and, to a lesser extent, in their actual mode of disclosure. Although many of the findings were consistent and in line with general predictions made prior to data collection, the existing variations and inconsistencies raise interesting new questions and issues for discussion and exploration.

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Although the interviews were fairly free-flowing in nature, varying somewhat from subject to subject as particular issues would arise, there was a strong focus on two general areas: 1) the subject's decision-making process *vis a vis* negative self-disclosure (ie. why they share or don't share -- their rationale for disclosing or not

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1. A composite of husband and wife satisfaction scores was used to define more and less satisfied couples during the examination of the interview data.

disclosing), and 2) the subject's stated mode of disclosure (ie. how they share negative thoughts and feelings.)

Combined, these two areas provide a fairly complete picture of a particular overall approach to negative self-disclosure. The following discussion highlights specific salient issues pertaining to negative self-disclosure in marriage and places them within the larger context of these two key areas of interest.

#### ISSUES PERTAINING TO RATIONALE FOR DISCLOSURE/NON-DISCLOSURE

*Heighing the importance of negative self-disclosures / Prioritizing.* Overall, the women in more satisfied relationships were more likely to show evidence of having weighed the importance of a particular disclosure in coming to a decision about whether or not it was an item worth sharing with their spouses. As shall be seen, this weighing of priorities encompassed a number of different issues but, at its most basic, reflected a valuing of time spent with one's spouse and a wish not to waste time on unimportant negative disclosures if more significant issues might be at hand. Consider the following responses to NSDS item #11 which asked subjects about sharing their frustrations over being detained by an annoying acquaintance:

"What I would share with him would be things that were more important." (Subj. #13)

"I don't think that would be important enough... We have so many other things to discuss." (Subj. #11)

"Sometimes you don't need to go on about things like that...I feel that I have more important things, I mean there are so few hours in the day where you're together." (Subj. #3)

"We do talk about most things, and in order to do that, some of the things just aren't as important as others, so that might not be worth talking about." (Subj. #10)

"I share most things with my husband ... Assuming there was time and not too many other things to talk about, I would want to share that because ... my husband might help me to understand whatever it was that made me feel impatient or annoyed... We're both real busy right now, so the amount of time that we have to talk about things is somewhat limited, so I might choose not to talk about something like that if I felt that it weren't worth the time." (Subj. #16)

"We discuss a lot of things together at the end of the day... [but] maybe there are things that we wouldn't have time to discuss. Maybe there are times when I have things on my mind that I'd be likely to discuss with him, but he has something more important on his mind to discuss, so I put mine off." (Subj. #1)

Although these women (and others not quoted here) varied in terms of how likely they imagined they would be to share the thoughts and feelings described in this item (and other items), they are similar in their attention to the importance of the disclosure in the grand scheme of things and in the context of other issues and time available with their spouse. Their statements convey a sense of wanting to "save room" for more significant interactions and they demonstrate that the importance of a particular item factors into their decision-making about whether or not to share something. In weighing the value of a particular disclosure, they convey something about the value they place on their spouse and the quality of their relationship -- his

importance is a factor on the scale.

Although the women in less satisfied relationships also varied in their stated degree of likeliness to disclose, this weighing of priorities and attention to an item's overall importance was largely missing from their statements. A few typical responses to item #11 appear below:

"Usually I just blurt out everything to my husband. I just tell him everything... Anything that moves me enough, I do blurt out and talk about." (Subj. #23)

"I share everything with my husband, and I share everything because I'm the kind of a person who likes to talk. I'm not the kind of person who can harbor anything that bothers me. I must have someone to talk to." (Subj. #8)

"I tell him everything. I need to vent things out and I can always give him an earful -- not that he'll listen, but he knows the way that I am." (Subj. #4)

"I tend to be very communicative with my husband and I'm very verbal ... he might get annoyed and say he wasn't interested or was busy,... but if it's something that bothers me, I bring it up." (Subj. #24)

As noted above, the statements lack even the slightest evidence of a subject's weighing the importance of a given item when considering disclosure. Decision-making itself appears to be a somewhat foreign concept to these women, as noted in the "blurting," "venting," "sharing everything" nature of their statements. Although many women, including those in the more satisfied group, spoke about sharing most things with their husbands, there is something almost generic about the way these women approach negative disclosure and their spouses -- a certain quality which

suggests that any passing thought needs to be expressed to whomever is around, regardless of their degree of interest or availability. In contrast to the other group, the spouses of these subjects appear to be largely absent from consideration and importance, with the subject's passing need as the primary deciding factor.

*Consideration of one's spouse and/or relationship as a factor in decision-making about negative disclosures.* The preceding section addressed the issue of weighing the importance of certain negative thoughts and feelings (relative to others) when making decisions about sharing them or not sharing them with one's spouse. A notable, related aspect of such decision-making, already suggested in the statements of the subjects quoted above, is the attention or importance placed on the partner and/or the relationship in considering whether or not certain negative thoughts and feelings might be shared. This was an area in which certain striking differences emerged between the more and less satisfied groups.

Whether pondering relatively inconsequential negative thoughts and feelings, or ones of greater personal import, women in more satisfied relationships were more apt to consider their partner's feelings, mood, energy level etc. when contemplating whether or not a certain item should be shared. This mental inclusion of the spouse in the decision-making process took a number of forms, but at its most basic revealed a deep awareness of the partner as an

individual with needs and emotions of his own.

This fundamental awareness, as noted in the preceding section, is reflected in the weighing of the importance of a potential negative disclosure relative to other issues, and also in the recognition that the partner might be grappling with pressing issues of his own. Some women spoke of the importance of not "dumping" indiscriminately on their partners (eg. "Too many spouses use each other as therapists. Sometimes you just beat something to death that [your husband] can't help you with." -- Subj. #13). Others (such as Subj. #1, quoted above) indicated that their likeliness to share something at a particular time would be influenced by whether or not their husband had something more pressing on his mind. This type of thinking is most clearly articulated by the subject quoted below:

"I usually share most things with him ... [but whether or not I share] depends on the day, the situation. He has a very demanding job. I try to imagine whether he's had a good day or a bad day ... whether I'm going to load it onto him or work it out for myself... I can tell when he puts the key in the door ... whether he's had a good [work day]. If he bounces up the steps, then I know it's OK to unload some things on him. If he comes up slowly, ... I know when I look at his face that he's had a bad day ... then I may not tell him right away. I may wait until later ... when he's calmed down and I've calmed down. I try to do that for him so that when he has a bad day he can come home and unload onto me [and he does the same for me]. That's the only way that we can make it in our professions."  
(Subj. #18)

This woman is clearly attuned to subtle nuances of her husband's demeanor and demonstrates a great degree of caring

for him by reading his moods and energy level and taking them into account in considering the importance of "unloading" her frustrations onto him. Her comments throughout the interview revealed that she weighs her own needs for comfort, feedback, venting, or problem-solving against his particular needs at that time. He is an important part of the equation.

Contrast this pattern with the following women in the less satisfied group:

"I wouldn't share it if it didn't bother me. If it bothered me, I would share it [verbal emphasis, hers]. Sometimes I think, 'I've just got to unload this,' and I'll just talk -- to my son, my husband, my mother, my father. Just to get it out...I tell him everything. I'm the type of person that any emotion... I don't have any trouble at all. I'm pretty temperamental and expressive. I have no problem being very direct. I need to vent things out and I can always give him an earful -- not that he'll listen, but he knows the way that I am." (Subj. #4)

"I'm a talker ... I share everything with my husband because I'm the kind of person who likes to talk. [I can't] harbor anything that bothers me. I must have someone to talk to... whoever sits down to talk with me is going to hear it... When I've talked it out, that's when I'm able to leave it alone... I don't have any problem telling him anything that I want to tell him. The only problem is his listening ... But it's for me. I have to say it... I'm going to put it out there and tell you what's bothering me." (Subj. #8)

"That tends to be the type of person I am. I tend to discuss, talk about things ... It's just the nature of my personality... He might get annoyed and say he wasn't interested or was busy,... but if it's something that bothers me, I bring it up... I might get no support... nothing would have been accomplished, just verbalizing my annoyance non-productively." (Subj. #24)

"I just share everything that comes up...Anything that moves me enough, I do blurt out and talk about." (Subj. #23)

"I would be talking about it because it would really [bother me]... He probably wouldn't take it that seriously...he'd probably want to stop talking about it before I would... he's not the communicator that I am."  
(Subj. #21)

For the women above, decisions (if indeed decisions are even being consciously made!) about sharing negative thoughts and feelings are made entirely based on their passing need of the moment. One outstanding feature of these women's comments is the degree to which they use their personalities (eg. "I'm a talker") as a rationale for disclosure -- as though this justifies the sharing of any emotion at any time. They appear to value and almost flaunt their indiscriminate disclosure style (ie. "I have no problem [sharing anything]!"). Their husbands do not factor in as significant entities in the exchange -- and indeed there appears to be no real exchange -- only a talker and a passive listener. For some, there is something almost impersonal or generic about their sharing with their husbands, as though anyone else would do. The fact that their husbands might be busy or disinterested (and might even express this fact directly) does not impact their behavior, nor does the fact that there might be no positive outcome other than their "getting it off their chests."

Although the women above provide the most striking examples of a failure to account for the spouse in making decisions about negative disclosures, others in the less satisfied group demonstrated their more self-centered

approach in more subtle ways. Their reasons to disclose or not disclose stemmed almost exclusively from within themselves -- if something were important to them, if they needed reassurance or support, if they felt comfortable discussing the issue at hand, if they were bothered by something, if they thought they could elicit a particular desired response from their partner, etc. These reasons do not signal "self-centeredness" in and of themselves. In fact, they are reasons shared by many in the more satisfied group. It is the overall absence of the spouse and/or relationship from consideration, rather than the presence of any outstanding examples of self-centered behavior, which distinguishes their approach toward issues of negative disclosure.

The question of taking one's partner or relationship into account becomes particularly central when the negative thoughts or feelings one is considering sharing have direct bearing on one's spouse. In weighing these more critical types of disclosures, the women in more satisfied marriages conveyed an underlying concern for their partner as well as a sense of the importance they place on their relationship. In some cases, criticisms served as vehicles of caring in that they were designed to assist their partners in acts of self-improvement:

"[I'd tell him] naturally for himself. For him to look his best. And for me because I like to be proud of him, which I am." (Subj. #1)

"He's in the public eye and there are things he really needs to be aware of... I guess I know some of the

things he has gone through and what he has strived for, and so I will tell him that I want the very best for him. [I will tell him things about his behavior and appearance] that may affect how people are perceiving [him.]" (Subj. #18)

"I care about how he looks [and] about the fact that he's seeing people at work all day... If he's looking crumby, and his appearance counts at work ... I would tell him [and help him improve things]... He's probably just waiting for me to tell him." (Subj. #3)

"I care about him and don't want him to look stupid. We value each other's opinion." (Subj. #26)

"I love him and like to be proud of him... I want the best of life for both of us and I want to enjoy being close to him... If I didn't love him, I wouldn't care and I wouldn't say anything." (Subj.#11)

"[Since] he takes pride in his appearance, he should know when what he is doing is not helping...These are little things that can annoy people and it's nice if other people [close to you can point them out]. We would work it out together... I'm sure he would do the same for me." (Subj. #14)

The statements above illustrate the use of certain types of criticisms as tokens of caring. Although many women in the more satisfied group indicated personal reasons for wanting to share with their husbands their unhappiness with aspects of his appearance and/or behavior (ie. It would offend me, bother me, embarrass me etc.), they specifically included concern for their husband's independent well-being among their reasons for sharing such negative thoughts or feelings. This was true even in cases in which these disclosures were targeted more directly at bothersome behaviors, rather than simply at appearance. They might note, for example, that a behavior which had annoyed or embarrassed them could reflect badly on their spouses as

well, possibly impacting them negatively in the future. Some considered the possibility that their husbands had been unaware of the offensive nature of what they had done and probably would want to know how their behavior had been perceived. A sense of partnership emerged in some of these situations, with wives conveying an impression of joining with their husbands in an effort to mutually assist one another in improving aspects of themselves of which they might otherwise not be aware; in many cases it even appeared that their partners depended on and expected this type of criticism as a kind of "reality check" that could most safely take place within the context of their relationship.

In other situations in which the subjects' sense of frustration, anger, or disappointment with their husbands was more directly involved, concern for the greater good of the relationship was evident as was attention to the feelings and/or vulnerabilities of the partner who would be the recipient of those emotions:

"What I would weigh was whether my being bothered by whatever was more important than possibly making him feel hurt... I wouldn't want to make him feel bad for no good reason." (Subj. #16)

"I'd want to improve the situation... keeping things inside isn't going to help much... We could work something out to rectify the situation." (Subj. #31)

"[After noting she wouldn't want to hurt him] I think if something is bothering you, you should share it, because if you just hold it in, it just gets worse, and then you have a big fight." (Subj. #3)

"It's a situation [lovemaking] where you would want to be considerate and sensitive to his feelings...[not] make him feel inadequate...[but] you wouldn't want to have something like that between you." (Subj. #1)

"You always feel badly if you hurt the person that you love. I would hope that he would take it in the right vein and not see it as my not loving him as much... If I didn't love him, I wouldn't care and I wouldn't say anything." (Subj. #11)

"We are too close to hold something in that bothered me... I bring negative things up [soon after they happen] so that he doesn't have the feeling that I have stored this up... I would never want anything held back from me that could affect our relationship... [I would consider] his vulnerable points, where we won't get into a clean fight because it will trigger other emotions...If I thought he could see it... change it...But if it threatened him, if it was just dumping, I wouldn't do it." (Subj. #9)

"I think that if you don't tell someone for a really long time, it just keeps getting bigger and then turns into something that it wasn't to begin with... I don't believe in being hurtful." (Subj. #26).

"He needs to know the good things and he needs to know the bad things... It might be that he didn't realize that it was a big deal... We have a good marriage and to me it's important... We have a thing about letting each other know if something bothers us and not throwing it back six months later... You should have used it to change. Coming out later is destructive, not constructive." (Subj. #10)

The women in the more satisfied group did not deny their feelings of frustration, disappointment or annoyance. In discussing various interview questions, they recognized the existence of such emotions in certain situations. Their decision to share or not share those feelings, however, was based on issues which included their partner and relationship as a whole, rather than solely themselves. Although able to acknowledge a purely personal need to express criticisms (ie. getting it out, releasing the bad feeling), these women valued the ongoing health of their marriage and considered this factor, as well as their

husband's vulnerabilities etc. in determining their likeliness to disclose. The desire to promote growth and positive change was present in many of their statements, as was the belief that holding onto certain negative feelings might cause them to build into deep-seated, potentially destructive resentments. Regardless of the actual outcome of their decision (to disclose or not to disclose), these women showed evidence of weighing the possible impact of this decision on their partner and on their relationship as a whole.

Once again, this approach can be contrasted with the more self-centered one of many of the women in less satisfied marriages. As noted in some statements already quoted from women in that group, self-centered needs for venting negative emotion or simply being heard dominated the rationales of these women, with little attention to the impact certain disclosures might have on their partner or relationship. Where criticisms of their spouse were involved, these women similarly were more apt to cite reasons for sharing or not sharing which emerged primarily from within themselves. In cases of personal appearance or social behavior, for example, the subject's own feelings of embarrassment or pride might take precedence -- with little if any mention made of their partner's individual well-being. One woman (Subj. #21), for example, continually raised the issue of her husband's rapidly thinning hair because it was personally distasteful to her and she wanted

him to consider radical interventions; this was done despite the fact that he seemed to accept his condition and did not wish to undergo any treatment for it. Statements such as "It would bother me... I couldn't stand to look at it" (Subj. #5) or "I have to live with this person, and if he goes around [behaving in a certain way], it's embarrassing for me" (Subj. #24) took pre-eminence; the caring comments about hoping to assist their partners in various aspects of self-improvement for their own sake which were so evident amongst the more satisfied women were absent or much more muted in this group.

In cases of more pointed criticisms in which feelings of anger, frustration, or disappointment were associated more directly with the spouse, markedly less concern was expressed about the relationship or the potential vulnerabilities of the partner among the less satisfied couples. Once again, decisions about sharing/not sharing were based primarily on the subjects' passing needs and state of mind. In some instances, there was an almost combative quality to the commentary -- an emphasis placed on the individual's right to criticize and not suffer undesirable behavior, rather than on the importance of addressing frustrations so that they might be worked on together in order to improve the overall quality of the relationship.:

"First of all, if it affected me. I mean, if it affected me, I just feel that I have a right to say that to him... I wasn't going to put up with his not helping me. That's how I feel... If I'm not enjoying

myself, I can't live that way. I know what's right for me." (Subj. #4)

"He has to give me credit when I do something right... I figure I'll get the support I need from him, once I straighten him out." (Subj. #7)

"I would want him to be more of a worker... I'd be annoyed because I'd feel he was taking advantage [of me]... I'd just let him know that it was very important to me and that that was going to have to be the way it would have to be." (Subj. #23)

"He needs to know that he's not going to make his problem into my problem." (Subj. #8)

When decisions were made not to share a particular negative thought or feeling, this too was based primarily on the subject's needs or state of mind, rather than on concern for the husband's feelings. She might hesitate, for example, if she were not "in the mood for a hassle" or did not think she would get the response she desired. One woman, for example, when reflecting on whether or not she would discuss frustration over lovemaking with her husband, considered only her perspective when determining her likeliness to disclose:

"I'd be disappointed if it hadn't been good... I guess it depends on how I was feeling emotionally. Like if I didn't care that it wasn't really great... I don't feel that I have to try harder. I'd be kind of like, 'I don't have time for that.' ... I'd be very likely to tell him if I was in the mood and it was a bummer... I'd be frustrated and want to tell him. I would feel let down." (Subj. #21)

Once again, it is the overall absence of the partner and relationship from serious consideration that typifies the responses of many of the women in the less satisfied group. As noted throughout this section, whether

contemplating somewhat benign negative disclosures, or ones which might more personally impact their partners, the women in the more satisfied relationships were more likely to spontaneously include their spouses and issues pertaining to the greater good of their relationships as significant factors in their deciding about which negative thoughts and feelings should be shared. The women in the less satisfied relationships, in contrast, exhibited an approach to such decision-making which was generally more self- rather than other- centered.

#### ISSUES PERTAINING TO MODE OF DISCLOSURE

The previous section highlighted some of the differences which emerged in terms of the ways in which women in more and less satisfied relationships approach decision-making with respect to sharing various negative thoughts and feelings with their spouses. The focus now shifts to issues pertaining to how such thoughts and feelings might be shared by women in these two groups. The exploration of questions relating to mode of disclosure is less extensive than that of the previous section since it was more difficult to get subjects to provide a vivid picture of exactly how they might share something than it was to get them to discuss their rationales and general approach to negative disclosure issues within their marriages. Nevertheless, some interesting findings emerged in this area.

*Respect / Open vs. Closed Approaches.* Overall, women in more satisfied marriages were more apt to convey their negative thoughts and feelings in a way which demonstrated a certain respect for the individuality of their partner. This could be seen in the way that they left room for their spouse's opinion, point of view, or explanation. Their manner of sharing even criticism allowed for discussion and exchange; there often was a sense in which these women gave their partners "the benefit of the doubt," waiting for their input rather than issuing closed statements of blame. In cases in which undesirable or embarrassing behaviors had occurred, this often took the form of inquiring about why their husbands might have done or said things in a particular way:

"If I didn't like something, I'd tell him, ...[but] if he did it there might be a reason and I'd just want to know what it was...[so I might tell him it had embarrassed me, but ask] 'Why did you do that? Was there a part of the conversation that I missed?'" (Subj. #26).

[In response to husband's failure to acknowledge her winning an award] "I might say, 'I guess you don't realize what just happened. This was really important for me, but you are not saying much.' I'd ask him about it, because maybe there was something on his mind." (Subj. #31)

[If disappointed] I would let him know how I felt, 'Gee, I was disappointed and surprised. Maybe you don't realize what a big deal this is.' [If embarrassed over an incident] I'd let him know how I felt after giving an observation of how I saw the incident: 'Remember when... Maybe you should have backed down a little. I think you may have offended them. I felt a little bit squeamish.' Maybe he was not aware of what he did. [I'd want to understand and have him know] where my head had been." (Subj. #10)

"I might ask, 'Did you happen to notice the expression on \_\_\_\_\_'s face when you said that? Did you realize? Did you mean to do that?' If he thought about it and meant to do it, then that's his choice. He has a right to be who he is." (Subj. #2)

Although the women in the more satisfied group were capable of recognizing and expressing their negative feelings, they tended to leave some space open for their husbands' viewpoints or explanations. Their manner generally appeared to allow for the possibility of a more positive exchange and resolution of bad feelings. The style of many of the women in the less satisfied group, in contrast, seemed more closed and less conducive to discussion and resolution. They were more prone to state their bad feelings and sometimes their prescriptions for change without allowing for their partner's explanation or point of view:

"I would say, 'I think you were inappropriate. I think that you said the wrong thing. You embarrassed these people and were out of line.'" (Subj. #24)

"I'd just let him know that that was very important to me [his missed job opportunity] and [my choice] was going to have to be the way it's going to have to be." [If he failed to acknowledge her with flowers, she would say: "Look how nice \_\_\_\_\_'s husband is. He got beautiful flowers for her. How come he can remember and you can't?" (Subj. #23)

[When her husband made other plans for Saturday night] "I give you six and a half days to do whatever you want. I have only Saturday and I'm not going to give that up. I won't tolerate this." (Subj. #8)

[After her husband was brusque with someone] "I told him, 'You are really developing an attitude. I'm not going to stand for it and I don't think [he] should either. You should tell him what to do and then talk about it.'" (Subj. #4).

The tone of the above statements is highly critical and accusatory, leaving no room for discussion -- only for defensive arguing. Many of these women failed to indicate how the undesirable situations had made them feel, focusing instead on what was wrong with their partners. When personal feelings were included, they tended to be used not as a point of clarification or as an entree into discussion about the detrimental impact of certain behaviors, but rather as a flat, closed statement of blame and bad sentiment. In elaborating on their interactions, these women admitted that their sharing of negative feelings generally had poor outcomes, resulting in angry arguments and distancing rather than positive change. The women in the more satisfied group, on the other hand, conveyed in their comments a sense that discussion of negative thoughts and feelings usually eventually led to greater mutual understanding and often to desirable changes in behavior.

***Joining vs. Blaming*** An issue somewhat related to that discussed above concerns the manner in which the subject would present her negative thoughts or feelings. Women in more satisfied relationships were more apt to communicate a sense of joining with their husbands, either in terms of potentially sharing blame for something (ie. It's our problem. What can we do about it? -- eg. "I'd try to make it not just him") or in terms of conveying their wish to improve a situation for overall increased mutual happiness.

For many, this joining was demonstrated by suggestions to work together on improving particular situations or aspects of behavior or personal appearance (ie. "Let's work together on correcting this bad situation or habit," or "Let me help you choose something more flattering"). For others it was conveyed through their focus on how something had made them feel, rather than on what was "wrong" with their spouse's behavior; one could argue that this approach indirectly includes both partners in the interaction, thus implying a wish to achieve an improved joint outcome. It is hard to generalize about what actual words may have been used by these women, but something in their tone, in their inclusion of themselves and relationships in their statements strongly suggested an alliance with their partners which potentially could soften even critical comments. By "mak[ing] my frustration his frustration, my concern, his concern," (as one woman described her strategy), defensive, destructive blaming and arguing could be somewhat avoided and greater understanding achieved.

As noted previously, the less satisfied women were more prone to issue flat statements of blame (eg. "I think you were inappropriate") which isolated their partners in their perceived wrongdoing. One woman went as far as indicating that part of her rationale for sharing negative thoughts and feelings about her husband with him was that he was "not going to make [his] problem into my problem." Rather than offering suggestions for joint efforts which could lead to

desirable changes, or sharing the responsibility for exploring and/or resolving a particular problem, direct prescriptions for alterations in behavior were likely to be issued in the form of "You must do \_\_\_\_." A striking example of this involved the woman who wanted her husband to enter a more lucrative career and simply told him that "that was going to have to be the way it was going to have to be." From her tone and wording, no mutual discussion or attempt at compromise seemed possible; she did not seem interested in his perspective on the situation. Rarely did such women focus on how a certain undesirable situation had made them feel, except when used as another facet of blaming, rather than as a bridge toward including themselves as participants in interactions with their partners.

*Other issues pertaining to mode.* Since it was more difficult to get subjects to vividly describe their actual modes of disclosure than it was to get them to explain their rationales for disclosing/not disclosing, and since individuals focused on different scenarios and exhibited their own personal manner of describing them, it is harder to generalize about such specific aspects of "mode" as the use of humor, timing, style, etc. Only a small subset of subjects, for example, mentioned humor as a vehicle for communicating negative thoughts and feelings. The women who referred to humor were from both more and less satisfied marriages; however, although individuals varied in terms of how clearly they described their use of humor,

there was some preliminary evidence that it was used somewhat differently by members of the two groups. Although both ostensibly used teasing or joking as a way of softening or lightening negative disclosures, the underlying caring or protective feelings for the spouse were more accessible in the more satisfied group (eg. "If it's something potentially sensitive, we often use humor -- [it] lightens it, [but] he knows what I'm talking about." Subj. #10). For the less satisfied group, there was some evidence that teasing could become cruel ("We have a standing joke; it's not really funny to me." Subj. #4) or a means of avoiding more serious underlying issues ("If you can't say something funny, don't say anything at all. It's kind of a rule in this household that you don't have a chance if you don't have a sense of humor." Subj. #28). Clearly, though, there were not enough examples of different uses of humor to warrant drawing strong conclusions at this point.

Not all women specifically addressed the question of timing when discussing their imagined mode of responding to specific scenarios. The issue of timing, however, was addressed indirectly within the section on rationales for disclosure in that, by discussing circumstances which would influence their decisions about whether or not to share a particular negative thought or feeling, individuals revealed something about how they would time their disclosures. As noted previously, then, women in more satisfied relationships placed a greater emphasis on their partner's

feelings, mood, energy level, etc. when contemplating whether or not a certain item should be shared. The spouses of women in less satisfied relationships, in contrast, if taken into account as a factor in the decision-making process at all, were secondary to the subject's personal needs with respect to disclosure/non-disclosure.

The question of timing what will be shared, once the decision has been made to share, is simply an extension of this thought process. Recall for a moment the woman who tried to judge how her husband felt when he arrived home from work (Subj. #18 - more satisfied, p. 68); her estimation of how burdened and tired he might be after a trying day would influence her decisions about whether to disclose and also about when to do so (eg. "If he's had a bad day ... I may wait until later ... when he's calmed down."). The actual stated time for disclosure (ie. right after the event, some time later, etc.) is secondary to the reason for selecting it and whether partner and/or relationship needs factored into this decision. Some women in the more satisfied group, for example, felt that it was important to share their feelings soon after an event because it prevented resentments from building; others felt that waiting was optimal because it gave both parties a chance to cool down. In either case, the spouse and the "greater good of the relationship" play a part. As noted before, the women in the less satisfied marriages often failed to include their partners as important components of

their decision-making; timing, when discussed, appeared to have more to do with the subject's personal needs.<sup>2</sup>

Any attempt to discuss "style" as an aspect of a subject's mode of disclosure becomes complicated because, in its truest sense, "style" incorporates many of the important issues already discussed. Whether or not an individual issues negative disclosures in an open, incorporating manner or in a closed, blaming one -- whether they invite their partner's point of view and share their own feelings about a situation or simply condemn and prescribe alterations, all contribute to an overall disclosure "style." In this sense, then, the preceding discussion suggests ways in which women in more and less satisfied marriages differ in their "styles" of disclosure.

It was more difficult, however, to get a clear picture, from the type of self-report data collected, of other aspects of "style" such as the subtlety or bluntness with which an individual might issue her negative thoughts or feelings (particularly criticisms). As noted, subjects focused on different types of scenarios and varied in the ease with which they would "role play" the actual words, tone etc. that they might use in communicating their

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 2. Some women in the less satisfied group took their spouses' mood, state of mind, etc. into account when considering timing etc., but again, this appeared to be for self-protective rather than altruistic reasons (eg. "I might not tell him right away if he were in a frame of mind where I knew he wouldn't be helpful to me." Subj. #4). This phenomenon will be discussed more completely later.

feelings to their partner. There was some preliminary evidence, however, that women in more satisfied relationships, although more considerate of their husbands' needs, vulnerabilities etc. overall, were capable of being quite blunt in certain circumstances, particularly those dealing with personal appearance. Comments such as "That color/suit is unbecoming, change it," or "Your hair is too long, get a haircut," were not uncommon among the women in even the most satisfied relationships. In more "sensitive" areas such as lovemaking, however, these same women appeared to enlist a much more subtle approach (eg. "I would be very careful if I felt that it were something that would hurt him or make him feel that he was not what he should be. I would say it in a very gentle way." Subj. #11). Women in the less satisfied relationships appeared to be more blunt in general, often even in more sensitive areas; one woman, for example, indicated that if she had not enjoyed lovemaking she would simply say, "I didn't enjoy it. I want you to do something different."

Although it would not be completely accurate to say, then, that women in more satisfied relationships were always subtle and gentle in their disclosure styles and that women in less satisfied relationships were always blunt, in general the women in the more satisfied group did exhibit a more sensitive "style" of negative disclosure *vis a vis* their partners; they were more apt to consider the needs and/or vulnerabilities of their spouses and "include" them

in their decision-making about disclosures as well as in many aspects of their chosen manner of disclosure.

#### VARIATIONS AND INCONSISTENCIES IN FINDINGS

Despite the fact that, as demonstrated, an overall difference between women in more and less satisfied marriages emerged in an examination of their approaches toward negative disclosure with their spouses, certain variations and inconsistencies surfaced as well. In a few instances, individuals deviated markedly from expected patterns, with predominant self-disclosing behavior which was indistinguishable from members of the other satisfaction-group. In other cases, inconsistencies were more subtle, with some underlying tendencies in keeping with group patterns, but notable occasions of behaviors or attitudes associated with the opposite group. Before discussing some of these examples of inconsistencies in individual behavior and violations of satisfaction-group norms, however, certain interesting variations on (rather than complete contradictions of) the "less satisfied" group pattern emerged which merit closer inspection.

#### Variations on the less satisfied pattern

***Deliberate decision-making.*** Although the general findings suggested that women in more satisfied marriages approached decisions about negative disclosures with greater care and attention to their partners than those in less

satisfied marriages, a few women in this latter group exhibited a style of decision-making that was quite careful and deliberate. In contrast to other women in the less satisfied group who showed a somewhat indiscriminate approach to negative disclosures, and, as noted, tended to base their "decisions" about sharing or not sharing primarily on their own state of mind, these women attempted to gauge their husband's mood or likely response in determining whether or not something negative should be disclosed. This was evident to some degree in their approach to most items, but was particularly true with respect to negative thoughts or feelings that they might be having about themselves:

"[I want to be] confident that I know how he'll respond... so [I look] for the little hints that I can glean from him ... I wouldn't want to bring it up until I had sort of figured out what to do ... He doesn't have a standard response. It's tough. He might say, 'That's not like you, ' or he might say, 'That was dumb, why did you do that?'" (Subj. #7)

"I don't know if he could even perceive what other people's reaction to me might be, so I don't know if he would even understand that I would feel that way... If it were something that he did think were a problem with me, I don't think he would make me feel better ... If I did something stupid and I [thought] that he'd agree ... I might not mention it." (Subj. #17)

"He wouldn't go out of his way to make me feel better, but also he wouldn't go out of his way to make me feel worse... If I told him that I was feeling unattractive, he would probably say, 'So?'" I wouldn't get much of a response [so I'm somewhat unlikely to share it.]" (Subj. #28).

The women described represent an interesting variation on, rather than complete contradiction of, the pattern

exhibited by other women in the less satisfied group. There were some instances in which, similar to women in the more satisfied group, they showed evidence of real consideration of their partner's needs and well-being (eg. "I try not to say things that might hurt you when I'm angry at you if I care about you," Subj. #17). In most cases, however, their reasons for sharing or not sharing appeared self-protective rather than altruistic. In instances in which they might feel critically toward their spouses, they might try, for example, to determine the likelihood of an unpleasant scene (eg. "He gets real testy... He gets really upset and nasty ... if you say stuff to him [criticize], so ... no, I don't think I would..." Subj. #28). In cases involving general negative thoughts or, particularly, feelings of a self-critical nature such as those quoted in the paragraph above, they tried to ascertain the probability of receiving an interested, supportive, or ego-boosting response versus a destructive, ego-deflating or disinterested one.

Insofar as these women paid attention to the potential responses of their partners and included this information in their decisions about disclosure, they contradicted the general pattern exhibited by those women in the less satisfied group who appeared to base such decisions primarily on their own passing needs. Many of the underlying reasons given for considering their partners' reactions, however, reveal that "self" rather than "other" needs lay at the core of many of these decisions.

Consideration of a husband's mental state often arose in response to concerns about how his reception of a particular disclosure would impact them -- would they be supported, understood, taken seriously, made to suffer the "nasty" behavior of an irritable spouse? Although this may be quite adaptive in that bad feeling could only mount as a result of sharing something with someone who would react with disinterest or lack of support, it differs from the type of rationales provided by many of the women in the more satisfied group. Although the women in that group certainly might have reasons for sharing or not sharing that reflected "self"-involved needs (eg. desires to vent or wishes to avoid unpleasantness), most of them were more likely to provide responses which demonstrated that they attended to their husbands' mood or state of mind for his sake or for reasons that bolstered the greater needs of the relationship.

With all of the findings presented in this study, it is important to consider the impact of the climate of the marriage on disclosure patterns, rather than simply the influence of such patterns on the marital relationship. This issue will be addressed further in the next chapter, but bears specific mention at this point since there are indications that to a substantial degree the women quoted above refrain from disclosures as a result of anticipated lack of support on the part of their spouses. Their expectations of failed empathy clearly emanate from past

experiences, influence present behaviors, and demonstrate something important about the nature of their relationships. The phenomenon described below similarly speaks to this issue.

***"Chartered territory:" a reliance on benign, "frequently traveled" negative disclosures.*** The findings discussed at the very beginning of this chapter suggested that women in the more satisfied relationships were more likely to weigh the importance of a given item in considering whether or not to share it than were women in less satisfied relationships. The implication of these findings, suggested by the content of the subjects' statements, was that the women in more satisfied marriages were more prone to share negative thoughts and feelings that they deemed important or significant, whereas those in less satisfied marriages often failed to distinguish between important and unimportant disclosures, basing their likelihood of sharing primarily on their passing mood or state of mind.

A few women in the less satisfied group somewhat altered this pattern in that they did consider the importance of a given item in determining their likelihood of disclosing; they differed from their more satisfied counterparts, however, in that they appeared to gravitate toward familiar, less significant areas of negative disclosure. This "flight into chartered territory" seemed to provide these women with an arena in which to commiserate with their spouses or unload various sorts of negative

thoughts and feelings without risking the potentially distasteful consequences which might arise if more meaningful negative feelings were raised. The following comments illustrate this pattern:

"If he had encountered the same problem. If we agreed and had already discussed [it] ... it depends on if it's happened before ... [then it's more likely to be shared]" (Subj. #17)

"That's just the sort of thing that we talk about... It's entertaining. It gives us something to talk about." (Subj. #28, referring to the scenario about complaining about an annoying acquaintance. Her responses to other items indicated a tendency to shy away from significant negative feelings.)

"A pattern I have in terms of deciding what to share is whether or not our perception of a situation is the same. If I'm confident that I know how he'll respond [I'm more likely]. [If] we've been over it before ... [I can share and] we can move on. But if it's uncharted territory .. there are many more unknowns ... If it's just a temporary thing, it would come up ... But the bigger it is, the slower it comes around." (Subj. #7)

In that these women attend to the importance of a given item and weigh this as a factor in their decisions about disclosure/non-disclosure, they differ from the members of the less satisfied group who generally failed to do so and indiscriminately shared whatever moved them at a particular time. In their reliance on previously discussed, less important areas of negative thoughts and feelings, however, they differ from many of the women in the more satisfied group who indicated a general preference for sharing what they felt to be important. Insight into this phenomenon probably stems, once again, from the existing marital relationship and how it has shaped the individual's

perceptions of the partner and expectations regarding outcome. By sticking to less significant, "frequently traveled" types of negative thoughts and feelings, these women assure themselves of a safe arena for commiseration, venting, etc. Unlike the more satisfied women who seem confident in the interest, support, and/or problem-solving participation of their partners, these women appear to fear the unpleasant consequences of sharing more significant negative thoughts or feelings.

Inconsistencies in individual behavior and group patterns.

Taking the overall findings from the examination of the interview data, one can discern two general patterns of approach to negative disclosure within the marital relationship: one, which is characterized primarily by its genuine concern and consideration for the partner and/or marriage, and the other, which is characterized by its primary focus on the needs of the individual discloser. As noted throughout the chapter, these basic orientations reveal themselves in the manner in which the individuals think about and make decisions about disclosure/non-disclosure as well as in the actual ways in which negative thoughts and feelings are conveyed.

It is important to recognize, however, that, although "more satisfied" subjects were generally more genuinely considerate of their partners while "less satisfied" subjects were more self-absorbed, inconsistencies in behavior existed, as would be expected when one considers

the complexity of the marital satisfaction variable, of individual personalities, and of the interpersonal dynamics existing between two members of a couple. As noted previously, in some cases inconsistencies manifested themselves within individuals who possessed many tendencies in keeping with group patterns, but had notable examples of behaviors associated with the opposite group; in a few cases, however, individuals deviated markedly from expected group patterns, exhibiting predominant self-disclosing behavior which was indistinguishable from members of the opposite satisfaction-group. The latter situation was particularly evident within the less satisfied group.

Overall, patterns were more consistent among the members of the more satisfied group. As noted, most of these women had approaches toward negative self-disclosure in their marriages which revealed basic underlying consideration of and sensitivity toward their partners and relationship. There were certainly instances, however, in which such women expressed "self" oriented needs for comfort or for venting personal frustration and irritation; although there were exceptions, the general trend was for this to occur within a larger context which included partner or relationship issues. One surprising finding touched on previously, however, involved the bluntness with which some women in this group delivered certain negative disclosures. The apparent insensitivity with which they issued certain criticisms was striking, given the otherwise considerate

nature of their approach toward their spouses. Comments such as, "You look like a bum, don't wear those pants," or "You look retarded, cut your hair," in many ways seemed to violate the general demeanor of these women and of the overall group. In such situations their own feelings of dislike etc. seemed to take precedence and there appeared to be little room for the opinions of their partner. It may be that the dynamics of the particular relationships allow for some bluntness in certain areas (eg. appearance), that these comments are delivered and received within the context of playful teasing, or that they can be accepted as reflections of deeper levels of caring; it is also possible, of course, that such insensitivity is not always well received and that, in some cases, it brings about negative counter-reactions from the spouse-recipient. The "more satisfied" group, after all, was not a "perfect marriage" group.

Some women in the more satisfied group exhibited self-disclosing behavior typical of women in the less satisfied group. Two subjects (#14 & #31), for example, although in many cases genuinely concerned about their partners, feared negative responses from their spouses in certain areas and avoided these disclosures for completely self-protective reasons; in this respect, their behavior was indistinguishable from that of some of their less satisfied counterparts (ie. #7, #17, #28, quoted at the beginning of this section). Another subject (#20), who was among the top four most satisfied couples, despite some evidence of

consideration for her partner (ie. not wishing to burden him, etc.), had an approach to negative self-disclosure that mirrored the less satisfied pattern. In addition to being very blunt in many of her criticisms (eg. "That's annoying. Don't do that!"), she issued closed statements of blame and often focused on her own feelings of irritation as the primary rationale for disclosure. In speculating about her response to embarrassment over her husband's social behavior, for example, she imagined telling him that his behavior had been unacceptable and that he had "... ruined it for the whole table..." Rather than seeking his point of view or explanation, she further imagined telling him, "Don't you dare get into that same discussion [in the future]!"

Although nine out of the ten least satisfied women had approaches toward negative disclosure that were primarily "self" oriented<sup>3</sup>, the pattern of behavior within the less satisfied group as a whole was far less consistent than that of the more satisfied group, which is not surprising, given the somewhat narrow (and high) range of marital satisfaction in the total sample. Five women (four closest to the median

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3. This group incorporated the women who failed to take their relationship or partner's needs, mood, or vulnerabilities into account as well as those who concerned themselves with how their spouses might react, but who appeared to do so primarily for "self" involved reasons. Although some of these women might make passing comments which revealed some concern for their partners (ie. "I would not want to hurt him") a basic "self" rather than "spouse/relationship" orientation colored their approaches toward negative disclosure.

and one within the five least satisfied) deviated dramatically from the behavior of the larger group. One woman showed some evidence of self-centeredness and insensitivity, but the predominant self-disclosing behavior of these women was indistinguishable from that of the main group of more satisfied women; like their more satisfied counterparts, their statements reflected basic concern and respect for their partner and an inclusion of him in their general approach toward negative disclosure.

One woman (#12) deserves particular mention; although within the five least satisfied marriages, she was the most striking individual contradiction to the less satisfied pattern in that she most consistently exhibited a negative self-disclosure style which contained the important elements evident in the more satisfied group. Despite the fact that she expressed real frustration with some of the basic incompatibilities and difficulties within her marriage, she demonstrated in her approach to negative disclosures a genuine concern for her husband's well-being and for the overall health of the relationship to a degree which surpassed that of many of the members of the more satisfied group. Her mode of disclosure was consistently open, non-blaming and respectful of his point of view. She carefully considered the degree of importance of particular disclosures, the general state of mind her husband might be in, and how various issues might affect him -- and did so in a way which showed true consideration for him, not merely

self-protection.

*A brief word about discrepant couples.* As shown in three separate ways in the previous chapter, there was a very high rate of agreement between husbands' and wives' ratings of satisfaction with their marriages. In only five cases, in fact, did a husband's rating place him in a separate category (ie. "more" vs. "less" satisfied) from his wife's. In three out of these five cases, husband and wife differed by fewer than 8 raw score points from one another, placing the spouses very close to their respective medians. All three of these subjects exhibited negative disclosure styles in keeping with those of the more satisfied group (ie. their interviews revealed them to be consistently considerate of their spouse and/or relationship in terms of decision-making and mode of disclosure). The two couples in which husband/wife scores differed more markedly (by 21 and 16 raw score points respectively) similarly demonstrated patterns more in keeping with those of more satisfied couples. In the first of these two couples (in which the wife's score was above the median and the husband's below, with an average placing them above the median), the wife exhibited a pattern strongly in keeping with that of the other women in more satisfied categories; she was respectful of her partner's individuality, considerate in terms of timing and weighing the importance of various circumstances, and genuinely concerned about the well being of her partner and relationship without appearing to do so for self-

protective reasons. The woman in the second of these two couples also more closely resembled the pattern of the other women in the more satisfied group (her MSS score had placed her below the median, her husband's had placed him above, and their composite score had placed them slightly below the median), with only relatively mild indications of a "less satisfied" pattern in a few instances in which self-centered reasons for disclosing negative thoughts or feelings took precedence over spouse/or relationship needs and closed statements of criticism were issued.

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The various findings presented add to our overall understanding of negative self-disclosure patterns within marriage, but, at the same time suggest a number of issues which bear further examination and discussion. The chapter which follows attempts to summarize the overall results of the project as well as address some of the questions raised by the present study.

## VI. DISCUSSION

The present study examined the relationship between negative self-disclosure and marital satisfaction in two general ways: 1) quantitatively: by comparing more and less satisfied couples in terms of the the female partner's stated degree of likeliness to share with her spouse negative thoughts and feelings of three different types (and overall), and 2) qualitatively: by comparing more and less satisfied couples in terms of the female partner's general approach to decision-making about issues of negative self-disclosure within her marriage and in terms of her actual mode of sharing negative thoughts and feelings with her husband. The present chapter seeks to review briefly the outcome of these investigations, to reflect on implications of the findings and limitations of the study which may have influenced the results, and to suggest possible future avenues of exploration.

*Overview and discussion of quantitative results.* The results of the quantitative examination of the data were mixed. Although it had been hoped that clear distinctions could be drawn between women in more and less satisfied marriages in terms of their likelihood of sharing various types of negative thoughts and feelings, no differences emerged between the two groups for overall negative disclosures (TND) or for any of the subcategories of negative disclosure (GND, NSR, or CRS) when using either the

wife's or the combined husband and wife's rating of the marriage as the measure of satisfaction. When using the husband's rating of the marriage to distinguish between the more and less satisfied groups, however, a significant difference in criticisms of spouse (CRS) was found, both in terms of frequency ( $p < .01$ ) and proportion ( $p < .05$ ), with higher CRS among women whose husbands were in the more satisfied group. There was also a lower proportion of general negative disclosures (GND) found for wives of more satisfied husbands ( $p < .05$ ), and a trend toward greater frequency of overall negative disclosures (IND) ( $p < .058$ ) found for wives of more satisfied husbands.

Taken as a whole, then, what do these findings suggest? Given the general belief (noted in the literature reviewed) that negative disclosures are associated with feelings of dissatisfaction in long-term relationships, it is particularly interesting to note that, overall, no significant differences between the more and less satisfied groups existed -- and that where differences were found, they tended to demonstrate an opposite trend to what might have been expected -- that negative disclosure of certain types (CRS) was higher in the more satisfied group. Only in the case of proportion of general negative disclosures (GND -- the most mundane and least personal type of negative disclosure), did the results show greater proportions among women with less satisfied husbands.

Although it is tempting to conclude that negative self-

disclosures do not negatively impact relationship satisfaction, and that certain types might even positively influence the partnership, it is important to remember the reciprocal relationship between the two variables. The fact, for example, that the more satisfied husbands had wives who exhibited a greater frequency and proportion of criticisms of their spouse (CRS) might suggest something positive about the way these wives issue and use these criticisms (ie. done sensitively or for caring purposes so that it does not exert a detrimental influence on the marriage), but it may also reflect something about the existing climate of the relationship and how it influences the disclosure patterns of these women. Women with husbands who are more satisfied probably sense that satisfaction and, within the context of a benign, caring relationship, feel more at liberty to share significant negative thoughts and feelings even if they are critical.

In contrast, wives with husbands who indicate lower levels of satisfaction may have less confidence in their husband's positive regard and may fear the consequences of critical disclosures; the unhappy or uncertain climate of their marriage might contribute to their tendency of avoiding such disclosures, causing them to concentrate more of their shared negative thoughts and feelings in more mundane areas (ie. GND). There was some evidence, in fact, for this within the interviews: a certain subset of less satisfied women appeared to gravitate toward "safe,"

relatively unimportant areas of negative disclosure due to concerns about unpleasant responses from their partners.

In another aspect of the data, significant differences between the two groups emerged in the six items embedded within the Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS) which were designed to tap into husband and wife attitudes toward the negative self-disclosing behavior of their partners. Here, as noted toward the end of Chapter IV, more and less satisfied wives differed strongly on four of the six items and husbands from the two groups differed strongly on five of the six items. The results suggest that more satisfied husbands -- and wives -- perceive their partner's negative disclosing behavior differently from their less satisfied counterparts. Regardless of what might be self-reported as tendencies in negative self-disclosing behavior, these items -- revealing the perceptions of the recipients of actual negative disclosures within the context of the marriage -- indicate that both women and men who were less satisfied with their relationships overall were also less satisfied specifically with the way their spouses managed various aspects of negative self-disclosure; they felt, to a greater extent than more satisfied men and women, that their partners handled delicate matters insensitively (in ways that would make them angry), that they shared unpleasant thoughts with them at times when they felt unable to cope with them, and that they were too critical of them. In addition, less satisfied wives felt to a greater extent than

more satisfied wives that their husbands tended to say things that were better left unsaid, and less satisfied husbands felt that their wives shared too many insecurities with them and spent too much time complaining about things in their lives.

Since husbands in this study did not complete the NSDS or the interview, no data are available about their self-reported tendencies in terms of negative self-disclosure; we can merely note, as described above, that more and less satisfied wives differed in terms of their degree of satisfaction with various aspects of their partners' behavior in this area. For the wives, however, comparisons between findings on the six items and on the NSDS raise interesting questions. For example, although women with more and less satisfied husbands did not differ on the NSDS in terms of their stated likelihood of sharing personal insecurities and self-criticisms (NSRs), their husbands perceived them differently in this area -- ie. less satisfied husbands (to a greater extent than their more satisfied counterparts) reported that their wives shared too many personal insecurities with them. Although women with less satisfied husbands appeared to issue fewer criticisms (ie their frequency and proportion of CRS was lower than for wives of more satisfied husbands), these same less satisfied husbands felt to a greater extent than more satisfied husbands that their wives were too critical of them. In terms of general negative disclosures (GND), which might be

viewed as items which reflected complaints about general life issues, less satisfied husbands to a greater extent than more satisfied husbands indicated on the six items that their wives spent too much time complaining about things in their lives; this finding was not corroborated on the NSDS in terms of frequency of GND, but was in terms of proportion of GND, in which wives of less satisfied husbands were found to issue a greater proportion of this type of negative disclosure. The other questions in the six-items (ie. spouse raising delicate issues in a way that makes you angry, or raising unpleasant issues at a time when you feel unable to cope) reflect more directly on qualitative aspects of negative disclosure and, to the extent that qualitative differences were observed in these areas in the interview material, supported those general findings.

Most of the six items embedded in the MSS, then, succeeded in differentiating between the more and less satisfied groups, demonstrating that individuals in each group had significantly different perceptions about their spouse's negative self-disclosing behavior, with the less satisfied group reporting less satisfaction with various aspects of this behavior. These findings implied a relationship between marital satisfaction and negative self-disclosure, somewhat suggesting its negative impact on -- or at least negative association with -- marital satisfaction. This does not negate the possibility, however, that negative self-disclosures, when handled sensitively and with

consideration, exert a benign or possibly even beneficial impact on a relationship (or at least exist successfully within a healthy relationship); presumably two individuals might share the same negative thought or feeling in different ways: one which might be experienced as alienating and distasteful to the recipient, and the other not. The findings on spouse criticisms may speak to this point in that less satisfied husbands reported that their wives were too critical, while the CRS scores of these women were lower in frequency and proportion than in the more satisfied group; one might here surmise that the criticisms issued by the wives of less satisfied husbands are experienced by those husbands as being truly critical, while those issued by the wives in the other group are not to the same extent. Similarly, complaints of various types and shared insecurities might be perceived and interpreted differently (ie. overwhelming dumping vs. reasonable sharing) depending on how they are handled. It is also probable that the overall atmosphere of the relationship would color the perceptions of the individuals within it. Some of these issues will be more completely addressed in the discussion of the interview data.

The NSDS, as noted, did not differentiate as clearly as the six items between the more and less satisfied groups. The results which were obtained when the husband's MSS scores were used to define the two groups must be received rather guardedly, given that they were not replicated in the

other two cases. A number of factors probably contributed to the weakness of findings using the NSDS. The instrument itself, although demonstrating reasonable internal consistency, was a previously unproven measure using a series of hypothetical scenarios and may have failed to adequately reflect the actual negative disclosure patterns of the individuals using it. There was some evidence from follow-up questions asked during the interviews that the instrument may not have been sensitive enough to capture individual variations: for some subjects a "4" rating (somewhat likely) indicated a great deal of hesitation to disclose, for others, this same rating reflected a very high probability of disclosing -- facts which only became apparent upon further elaboration by the subject. Moreover, as noted in Chapter IV, the overall rate of disclosure on this instrument for all 28 subjects was very high, making the range of response narrow and hard to interpret.

Similarly, only a narrow range was obtained from scores on the MSS; the overall degree of satisfaction in this sample was quite high, although very much in keeping with other studies of normal populations using this instrument. Differences between the two groups might have been more notable had a clinical sample been used in place of the "less satisfied" sample, or if a low, pre-set cut-off mark (eg. less satisfied subjects had to have average MSS item scores of less than 3.5) had been used to define the less satisfied group. Preliminary findings from the interview

data in fact suggested more striking differences between the disclosure patterns of the least satisfied of the "less satisfied" group and the rest of the subjects.

The interpretations of the quantitative data are also somewhat limited due to the relatively small number of subjects used. This factor may have contributed to the unexpected difference in outcome when husbands' MSS scores, as opposed to wives' or husbands/wives' combined MSS scores, were used to define the more and less satisfied groups. Since husband/wife agreement on marital satisfaction as defined by the MSS had been demonstrated in three separate ways to be very high, one might have expected the outcomes to be similar. Only a handful of NSDS scores shifted as a result of changing what defined the two categories (five subjects' scores shifted when wives' MSS was used instead of husbands', and four subjects' scores shifted when the combined score was used rather than the husbands'). It may be that the subjects who shifted brought some extreme differences with them as they did so, but any effect their scores might have had was magnified by the relatively small number of subjects in the sample.

*Overview and discussion of qualitative findings* The examination of interview material yielded compelling examples of ways in which the women in the more and less satisfied relationships differed in their general approaches to negative self-disclosure within their marriages. As noted in the previous chapter, women in more satisfied

marriages were far more likely to demonstrate a genuine concern and consideration for their partners and for the larger needs of the relationship both with respect to how they made decisions about which negative thoughts and feelings should be shared with their husbands and in terms of the actual manner in which they shared these feelings. A relative "self" centeredness of focus, on the other hand, dominated the responses of most of the women in the less satisfied group, in which individual personal needs and passing feelings exerted the primary influence on both decision-making and mode of disclosure.

The qualitative findings, then, suggest a true relationship between negative self-disclosure patterns and marital satisfaction. One must consider once again, however, the direction of influence between the two variables. On the one hand, the sensitive, inclusive, considerate approach of the women in the more satisfied relationships might impact their partners in a positive way, conveying to them the respect, concern and value that their wives' possess for them and for their marriage. At the very least, the manner in which they approach negative disclosures might mitigate some of the less desirable side-effects of such disclosures, softening the potential destructive impact of criticisms (and perhaps even allowing them to become growth-enhancing experiences) and limiting the degree to which other forms of negativity might otherwise leave the partner feeling overburdened.

Similarly, the more self-centered approach of the women in the other group might contribute to their partners' relative dissatisfaction, heightening feelings of being devalued and disregarded and intensifying the negative impact of criticisms and other complaints.

One must not forget, however, that the existing climate of a relationship (influenced by a multitude of factors) could also exert its influence on the negative self-disclosing patterns of its members. A woman who feels a strong sense of partnership with her husband and who senses his positive regard, supportiveness, fairness, and consideration would likely respond in kind; it is not surprising that a woman in such a relationship should convey a sense of caring and respect for her spouse even in situations in which she might be critical of him. Similarly, a woman who feels devalued and unsupported by her spouse might well exhibit less consideration for him in her approach to negative disclosures. The existence of a particular type of relationship between husband and wife would also be likely to influence the way in which each member of the couple might receive and interpret certain negative disclosures. This phenomenon may explain, for example, why, as seen, a certain amount of blunt criticism (in certain areas) might be issued by some wives in more satisfied relationships without apparently resulting in long-standing ill feelings from their partners. A man in a marriage generally characterized by supportiveness and

caring might be able to hear a blunt, closed statement of criticism such as "Change that outfit, you look like a bum!" in light of the concern and consideration usually extended to him -- and therefore not experience it as malicious; presumably the impact would be different within the context of a relationship characterized by lack of supportiveness and affection.

Clearly there are a host of factors influencing the degree to which an individual might feel satisfied with his or her partner and marital relationship -- factors which might confound attempts to generalize about negative self-disclosure patterns and their influence on marital satisfaction. For subject #12, for example, who indicated great dissatisfaction with her marriage (as did her husband) but who exhibited an extremely considerate approach toward negative self-disclosure within her marriage, significant areas of incompatibility between partners appeared to exist, strongly influencing each partner's feelings about the marriage. One aspect of their general incompatibility, stemming from significantly different childhood/family experiences, concerned their divergent perspectives on handling negative affect of any type (not just critical); whereas the wife came from a background which strongly encouraged the expression and external resolution of negative affect, the husband had a philosophy of "keeping a stiff upper lip" and denying or internalizing bad feeling. No matter how carefully or sensitively the female partner

might approach the sharing of various types of negative feelings, the expression of such feelings appeared to "go against the grain" for the husband, in much the same way that his tendency to remain quiet in the face of bad feeling did for his wife. The existence of certain basic incompatibilities, in this area or others, might similarly account for the different perspectives of some of the incongruent couples, explaining why one partner might report a different degree of satisfaction than another, despite the absence of anything particularly noteworthy about their patterns of negative self-disclosure.

*Closing comments and suggestions for further study.*

Although it is important to acknowledge the reciprocal nature of the relationship between negative self-disclosure and marital satisfaction -- as well as the existence of other issues which might influence an individual's degree of contentment within long-term relationships, these factors do not negate the findings generated by this study. The quantitative data, although disappointing in that strong distinctions between women in more and less satisfied relationships were not made in terms of the three categories examined, still offered suggestions that an individual's approach toward negative self-disclosure might mediate that variable's effect on marital satisfaction. The fact that individuals who were less satisfied with their marriages overall also were less satisfied with their partners' patterns of negative self-disclosure (suggesting in their

responses to the six items that their spouses were more critical, insensitive, inconsiderate) directly demonstrated a relationship between general marital satisfaction and perceptions regarding one's spouse's negative self-disclosures.

Interestingly, the partner's self-report data on negative self-disclosure (the NSDS) did not square with the spouse's perceptions; wives of less satisfied husbands, for example, reported fewer criticisms although these same husbands reported their wives as being too critical. Some of the inconsistencies evident between the data from the NSDS (which attempted to gauge the discloser's stated degree of likelihood of sharing various types of negative self-disclosure) and the data from the six items added to the MSS (which tapped into the recipient-spouse's direct perceptions of his partner's negative self-disclosure patterns) may be due to the influence of the discloser's particular way of thinking about and conveying these negative disclosures. As noted earlier, two women might be equally likely to criticize their spouses in certain areas but do so in two distinct manners -- one which would leave the partner angry, dissatisfied and feeling "criticized," and one which would not. The exploration of the interview data supported this idea in that wives in more satisfied relationships did in fact exhibit an approach to negative self-disclosure -- both in terms of decision-making and mode of disclosure -- that demonstrated more consideration, sensitivity, and caring

toward their partners than did wives in less satisfied relationships.

The findings of this study offer evidence to support the idea that an individual's manner of approaching negative self-disclosure may be more important than simply whether or not he or she engages in large or small amounts of such disclosure, but they leave a number of questions unanswered and in need of future study. One of the initial goals of this study had been to distinguish more clearly than had been done previously between various types of negative disclosure, with the belief that these types of disclosure might exert different influences on the marital relationship. The results in this area were somewhat disappointing. It may be, as suggested, that the issue of amount or likelihood of disclosing, regardless of category, is secondary to that of general approach toward disclosure; or it may be, as discussed earlier, that the instrument used was not refined enough to capture true individual variations in actual patterns of disclosing in these areas. Further work could be done in developing an instrument which would more accurately reflect subjects' tendency to share various types of negative thoughts and feelings with their spouse. It might be, for example, that overall disclosure levels were so high (somewhat obscuring results) because the items in the NSDS only included negative disclosure items; had positive disclosure items been included, and/or had people been encouraged to rate their likelihood of sharing a

particular item not just with a spouse but with a family member or close friend, a clearer picture of the individual's relative likelihood of sharing certain types of negative feelings and thoughts with their spouse might have been obtained.

In addition, a larger sample, with a more dramatic range of marital satisfaction, might have sharpened distinctions between members of more and less satisfied marriages. In future studies, a clinical sample might be used in place of the less satisfied sample, although such data might be confounded by the effects of communication skills learned by subjects during treatment. Another option already noted would be using a normal population but setting a low cut-off point in marital satisfaction scores to define the less satisfied group. If this method were used, access to a large number of potential subjects would be necessary in order to obtain large enough numbers for the less satisfied group, given the typical inflation of scores evident with the MSS and other satisfaction scales.

The findings stemming from the six items embedded in the Marital Satisfaction Scale suggest the importance of examining the spouse's direct perception of negative disclosing behavior in the marriage in addition to exploring the disclosing partner's reported tendencies in this area. It would be optimal to be able to obtain more complete information about the couple as a whole, with data about each spouse's self-reported tendencies (both in terms of

likelihood of disclosing various types of negative thoughts and feelings and with respect to manner of disclosure) as well as specific information about his or her impressions of the partner's behavior.

The interviews, which generated rich and persuasive examples of qualitative differences between the ways in which women in more and less satisfied marriages approached negative disclosure with their partners, might be used as a starting point for developing quantifiable coding methods for empirically examining various aspects of negative disclosing behavior related to decision-making and mode of disclosure. Direct observation of actual interactions between couples (role-playing or otherwise) might be useful in order to define more clearly specific aspects of mode of disclosure which were somewhat more difficult to obtain with the interview method used in this study. Once again, more dramatic contrasts between more and less satisfied patterns would likely be obtained if sharper differences in marital satisfaction were used to define the groups.

One issue raised by the interviews which merits further investigation concerns the two different styles apparent within the less satisfied group. As noted in Chapter V, although the overarching tendency of the women in the less satisfied group was to base their decisions regarding negative disclosure primarily (in fact almost exclusively) on their own needs, with little regard for larger relationship issues or for the needs or vulnerabilities of

their partner, two distinct styles were evident. Some women had no hesitation in sharing whatever they wished, whenever they wished, if they personally felt like doing so; the fact that their husbands might be disinterested or get angry did not alter their behavior. These women conveyed the attitude that it was their right to share or vent any type of negative thoughts and feelings and that they would not let anything stand in their way. A few other women in the less satisfied group, however, concerned themselves with their husbands' potential responses and appeared to be cautious about sharing things that they felt would be likely to result in arguments, disinterest, or unsupportiveness. Their reasons for sharing or not sharing were primarily self-centered, as were those of the other less satisfied women mentioned, but they nevertheless differed in their general approach to these issues. It would be interesting to examine more closely these two patterns of less satisfied individuals' approaches to negative self-disclosure in the hopes of answering certain intriguing questions: Is the first pattern more of a reflection of pre-existing personality traits while the second is more of a reaction against a disappointing marital situation? Do both patterns merely reflect the different personality types of the individuals concerned (ie. an extroverted, pugnacious personality vs. an introverted, retiring personality)? Is the first pattern associated with more dissatisfaction on the part of the spouse? Is dissatisfaction for spouses in

the first group more closely related to insensitive patterns of disclosure whereas, in the second group, is it related to other more global issues in the marriage such as basic incompatibilities in a variety of areas? Would treatment outcomes differ for the two groups? Closer examination of individuals within these marriages, ideally including data on both partners, might begin to address some of these questions.

\*\*\*\*\*

Although it had been hoped that sharper distinctions might have been found between women in more and less satisfied relationships in terms of their stated likelihood of disclosing negative thoughts and feelings of three different types, the overall results of the study upheld the importance of exploring an individual's general approach to negative self-disclosure when trying to understand the relationship of that variable to marital satisfaction. The quantitative examination of the data did not show negative self-disclosure to be higher among women in less satisfied marriages, as might have been expected. Preliminary evidence, in fact, suggested a tendency in the opposite direction, with both frequency and proportion of criticisms of spouse higher in women with more satisfied spouses and a slight trend in the same direction for overall negative disclosures. (Only for proportion of general negative disclosures, the most mundane and least personal of the types examined, did the tendency reverse itself). These

findings, coupled with those generated by an examination of the six items embedded in the Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS), highlighted the importance of looking beyond the simple question of amount of disclosure to the more complex issue of how a particular approach toward negative self disclosure might affect the perceptions of the recipient of those disclosures and, in so doing, potentially affect his feelings about the marriage. Explorations of the interview data showed persuasive differences between women in more and less satisfied relationships, revealing the former group to be more attentive to the needs of their partners and overall relationship when making decisions about which negative thoughts and feelings should be shared and when choosing a manner of disclosure. Although it is not possible to "prove" that the more considerate approach of these women results in greater satisfaction in their partners, or that the more self-centered one of their less satisfied counterparts negatively impacts their marriages, the interviews demonstrate an association between the two variables and suggest that important attitudes toward a partner and toward a relationship are conveyed through the manner in which negative thoughts and feelings are approached and shared -- attitudes which might well resonate beyond the particular issue being considered.

APPENDIX ADEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SURVEY

Thank you for your interest in this study. If you would like to participate, please complete this form, put it in the attached envelope, and drop it in the red, black, and silver checkered box in the mailroom. Once I have gotten your name and number, I will call you to arrange a convenient time to meet. Please feel free to call me with any questions or comments (914-776-7720).

- 1) NAME \_\_\_\_\_ 2) AGE \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) SEX \_\_\_\_\_ 4) RACE \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 6) TELEPHONE #: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) ARE YOU CURRENTLY MARRIED? \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) IF YES, HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN MARRIED? \_\_\_\_\_  
HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU KNOWN YOUR SPOUSE? (Include  
number of years married) \_\_\_\_\_
- 9) ARE YOU CURRENTLY EMPLOYED? \_\_\_\_\_  
a) IF YES: FULL TIME? PART-TIME? \_\_\_\_\_  
b) LIST/DESCRIBE YOUR OCCUPATION: \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) IS YOUR SPOUSE CURRENTLY EMPLOYED? \_\_\_\_\_  
a) IF YES: FULL TIME? PART TIME? \_\_\_\_\_  
b) LIST/DESCRIBE HIS/HER OCCUPATION: \_\_\_\_\_
- 11) PLEASE CHECK HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OBTAINED *BY YOU*:  
 \_\_\_\_\_ less than 12th grade  
 \_\_\_\_\_ high school graduate  
 \_\_\_\_\_ freshman, sophomore, or junior years in college  
 \_\_\_\_\_ two year college graduate  
 \_\_\_\_\_ four year college graduate  
 \_\_\_\_\_ graduate degree (Name of degree \_\_\_\_\_)
- 12) PLEASE CHECK HIGHEST ED. LEVEL OBTAINED *BY YOUR SPOUSE*:  
 \_\_\_\_\_ less than 12th grade  
 \_\_\_\_\_ high school graduate  
 \_\_\_\_\_ freshman, sophomore, or junior years in college  
 \_\_\_\_\_ two year college graduate  
 \_\_\_\_\_ four year college graduate  
 \_\_\_\_\_ graduate degree (Name of degree \_\_\_\_\_)
- 13) DO YOU HAVE ANY CHILDREN? \_\_\_\_\_  
 a) IF YES, HOW MANY? \_\_\_\_\_  
 b) WHAT ARE THE AGES OF YOUR CHILDREN? \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B

NEGATIVE SELF-DISCLOSURE SURVEY (NSDS)

Please read the following series of scenarios. For each scenario, ask yourself: IF I were in the given situation AND IF I were thinking and/or feeling the thoughts or feelings described... How likely or unlikely would I be to share them with my husband? Even if the situation is one that you do not think would really occur -- or the thoughts or feelings are ones that you do not think you would have -- *imagine what you would do* if such a situation *did* occur and if you *did* have such thoughts or feelings.

On the scale provided, please circle the one number which most closely represents how likely or unlikely you would be to share the thoughts or feelings described in the preceding scenario. The scale ranges from "1" (Very Unlikely) to "5" (Very Likely).

\*\*\*\*\*

{GND} 1) You have had an unpleasant incident at work. You feel angry and upset about it.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

{NSR} 2) You took a test that measured your intellectual ability in some area that you believe is important. You are shaken when you learn that you scored in the lowest 10% of all those tested. You feel stupid and have a bad feeling about yourself as a result of the experience.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

{CRS} 3) For some reason, you find yourself noticing your husband's appearance. His hair style and clothing are not attractive -- perhaps out of style or unkempt. This bothers you.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

**REMEMBER:** For each scenario, ask yourself: If I were in the given situation AND IF I were thinking or feeling the thoughts or feelings described ... how likely or unlikely would I be to share them with my husband? (Note: even if the situation is one that you do not think would really occur -- or the thoughts or feelings are ones that you do not think you would have -- imagine what you would do if such a situation did occur and if you did have such thoughts or feelings.)

-----

{NSR} 4) You overhear some co-workers unkindly mimicking something that you said at a recent meeting. Their portrayal horrifies you because it seems that in their eyes you are arrogant and somewhat rude. You are hurt, upset and embarrassed.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

{GND} 5) You went to a lecture/workshop and you felt that the presenter was pompous and that the workshop was a waste of time. You feel angry and annoyed.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

{CRS} 6) Your husband was given an unusual opportunity to advance his career and income. It would have required a minimal effort on his part. He did nothing and lost the opportunity. You think that he is not ambitious enough and you are annoyed.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

**REMEMBER:** For each scenario, ask yourself: If I were in the given situation AND IF I were thinking or feeling the thoughts or feelings described ... how likely or unlikely would I be to share them with my husband? (Note: even if the situation is one that you do not think would really occur -- or the thoughts or feelings are ones that you do not think you would have -- imagine what you would do if such a situation did occur and if you did have such thoughts or feelings.)

-----

{NSR} 7) You made a major mistake at work. Several of your co-workers were aware of your error. You feel embarrassed and humiliated.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

{GND} 8) You feel very strongly about a particular national issue (eg. abortion, military spending, money allotted for education). News networks have been featuring this issue. You feel angry and upset.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

{CRS} 9) You are frustrated with some aspect of your husband's lovemaking.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

**REMEMBER:** For each scenario, ask yourself: If I were in the given situation AND IF I were thinking or feeling the thoughts or feelings described ... how likely or unlikely would I be to share them with my husband? (Note: even if the situation is one that you do not think would really occur -- or the thoughts or feelings are ones that you do not think you would have -- imagine what you would do if such a situation did occur and if you did have such thoughts or feelings.)

-----

{NSR} 10) Upon returning from an expensive vacation, you encounter a friend for whom you have enormous respect and admiration. As she describes her volunteer work with the elderly, you are impressed with her generosity and concern for others. You begin to question the way you spend your time and money and feel genuinely superficial and self-centered. You leave the encounter feeling that you are not a good person.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

{GND} 11) You encounter an acquaintance who talks a great deal and detains you. Your impatience and annoyance with this person increase as they drone on and on. You feel irritated and frustrated.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

{CRS} 12) You and your husband both have had a hard week at work. Close mutual friends of yours are coming to dinner on Saturday. The house has to be cleaned, the shopping needs to be done, and the dinner has to be prepared. Your husband has not volunteered to do any of it. You are feeling angry and resentful.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

**REMEMBER:** For each scenario, ask yourself: *If I were in the given situation AND IF I were thinking or feeling the thoughts or feelings described ... how likely or unlikely would I be to share them with my husband?* (Note: even if the situation is one that you do not think would really occur -- or the thoughts or feelings are ones that you do not think you would have -- *imagine what you would do* if such a situation *did* occur and if you *did* have such thoughts or feelings.)

-----

{NSR} 13) You went to a party with your husband and felt that you could not get into a festive mood. You did not feel witty or interesting and you fear that you made a bad impression. The experience leaves you concerned that you lack poise and are somewhat socially awkward. You are unhappy about this.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

{NSR} 14) Your employer sent you to a workshop at which you were to receive important training. You are supposed to share your new "expertise" with your colleagues at an upcoming meeting. You did not understand much of what was presented at the workshop and, as a result, are worried about performing poorly and looking foolish in front of your boss and co-workers. You have a sense of failure and inadequacy.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

{GND} 15) You have dinner with an old schoolmate who drinks too much and generally behaves in an unpleasant, discourteous manner at the restaurant where you are eating. You are embarrassed and annoyed.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

**REMEMBER:** For each scenario, ask yourself: If I were in the given situation AND IF I were thinking or feeling the thoughts or feelings described ... how likely or unlikely would I be to share them with my husband? (Note: even if the situation is one that you do not think would really occur -- or the thoughts or feelings are ones that you do not think you would have -- imagine what you would do if such a situation did occur and if you did have such thoughts or feelings.)

-----

{CRS} 16) You and your husband go to a department store to return an item purchased there. A pleasant, young salesclerk tries to assist you, but informs you that "returns" are handled in a different part of the store. Your husband is annoyed that he must now wait in another line and makes a "scene" by loudly venting his frustration on the clerk. You feel that your husband was unreasonably demanding and excessively overbearing. You are embarrassed and angry about his behavior.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

{GND} 17) You take a route to and from work that takes you past the same homeless people. You feel a mixture of sadness, helplessness, frustration and annoyance.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

**REMEMBER:** For each scenario, ask yourself: If I were in the given situation AND IF I were thinking or feeling the thoughts or feelings described ... how likely or unlikely would I be to share them with my husband? (Note: even if the situation is one that you do not think would really occur -- or the thoughts or feelings are ones that you do not think you would have -- imagine what you would do if such a situation did occur and if you did have such thoughts or feelings.)

-----

{CRS} 18) You always try to "make a fuss" over your husband on special occasions such as birthdays, job promotions, etc. Perhaps you buy him flowers, prepare his favorite meal, or take him out. You just received the "Teacher of the Year" award in your school district; it is a great honor and you are very proud. Except for a brief "That's great, honey," your husband barely has acknowledged your achievement. You are hurt, disappointed and a bit angry with him.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

{CRS} 19) Your husband has developed a personal habit that you find unpleasant, unattractive, or offensive. You are bothered by this.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

{NSR} 20) You have just read a research report on female sexuality. It discusses an aspect of lovemaking about which you feel personally deficient. You are feeling unhappy and inadequate about some aspect of your sexual performance.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

**REMEMBER:** For each scenario, ask yourself: If I were in the given situation AND IF I were thinking or feeling the thoughts or feelings described ... how likely or unlikely would I be to share them with my husband? (Note: even if the situation is one that you do not think would really occur -- or the thoughts or feelings are ones that you do not think you would have -- imagine what you would do if such a situation did occur and if you did have such thoughts or feelings.)

-----  
 {NSR} 21) A well-meaning friend asks if "everything is okay," noting that you have been looking tired and pale. You have been feeling just fine, but, as you scrutinize yourself in the mirror later, you become genuinely concerned that you are not looking as attractive anymore. You are upset and bothered by this.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

{GND} 22) You strongly disagree with the childrearing practices of one of your neighbors. Rather than teaching their children good values and respect for others, they buy them every new toy on the market, and allow them to behave in a rude and unruly manner. You think that they are failing in their responsibility to their children -- and to society -- by allowing them to grow into unpleasant, self-centered human beings. You are saddened, irritated and angered by this.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

{CRS} 23) You are at a party with your husband. He does or says something that seems to bother your hosts. You think that he was impolite and you are angry and embarrassed.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

**REMEMBER:** For each scenario, ask yourself: If I were in the given situation AND IF I were thinking or feeling the thoughts or feelings described ... how likely or unlikely would I be to share them with my husband? (Note: even if the situation is one that you do not think would really occur -- or the thoughts or feelings are ones that you do not think you would have -- imagine what you would do if such a situation did occur and if you did have such thoughts or feelings.)

-----

{GND} 24) In order to obtain a promotion at work, you must take a certain course. It will not be very difficult, but you dread it and resent the impingement on your private time. You are annoyed and resentful.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unlikely				Very Likely

APPENDIX C

NEGATIVE SELF-DISCLOSURE INTERVIEW

Every single question need not be asked about every scenario explored during the interview. The overarching goal is to get a general "feel" for how the subject makes decisions about negative disclosure issues and how she actually shares such thoughts and feelings. Generally, questions A and B, pertaining to negative self-disclosure decision-making, should be read for each scenario discussed in the interview. Questions C - F should be pursued only for items about which the subject indicated some degree of likeliness to disclose. Questions G - I are asked once, of all subjects, at the end of the interview.

A-1 For scenario #\_\_\_ you placed yourself at [eg. "5" ] on the scale, indicating that you would be [eg. very likely] to share those thoughts and/or feelings with your husband. *Can you tell me why you placed yourself at this point on the scale? // How you decided that you would be [eg. very likely] to share those thoughts and/or feelings?*

B-1 *Are there circumstances that might make you more likely or less likely to share such feelings or thoughts?*  
[Prompt if necessary -- Try to give me the conditions under which you might be more/less likely to disclose feelings or thoughts regarding this matter.] This question is especially important if subject indicated uncertainty about disclosure (choice # 3).

B-2 *Why would these circumstances be important?*  
[Can be asked if not covered by response to B-1. The purpose of this question is to probe about how circumstances might impact decisions about sharing/not sharing.]

\*\*\*\*\*

C-1 *If you were to share these thoughts/feelings with your husband, HOW might you tell him?* [Prompt if necessary -- Try to complete the picture for me of how you might share these feelings and/or thoughts? What words might you use? How might you say it?]

C-2 Additional questions might be asked about *When and Where* these thoughts and/or feelings might be shared, and *why* these modes might be important. Again, the objective is to get a feeling for how the subject shares negative thoughts and feelings, and why she does it in the manner described.

- D-1 *What do you see as the main purpose of sharing these thoughts and/or feelings?* [Ask only if not covered by previous answers. The objective here is to get a sense of what the subject hoped to gain by sharing.]
- E-1 *How might your husband respond? What might be the outcome of sharing?* [Questions can be asked about what the subject might hope his response would be and, if different, what his *actual* response might be.]
- F-1 *How might you feel after sharing these thoughts and or feelings with your husband? Why?*

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* QUESTIONS BELOW ASKED ONCE OF ALL SUBJECTS AT THE END \*\*

- G-1 You've been given a number of situations involving negative thoughts or feelings you might have about yourself, your spouse and life in general, and you've been asked in each case to determine how likely or unlikely you would be to share them. Now I'd like to know, in general, if there have been times when you have gone against your better judgement? In other words, *is there any difference between what you think you should do -- how you think you should (said you would) approach sharing these kinds of thoughts and/or feelings -- and what you think you might actually do?* [Eg. Times when you've shared something when your better judgement told you you shouldn't. Times you've held something back even though your better judgement told you to share it.]
- G-2 *Why do you think you would go against your better judgement?* [Also might ask about the outcome.]
- H-1 *Can you describe an actual situation involving the sharing of negative thoughts and/or feelings with your husband?* [Procede with same general questions from above in order to find out about decision-making and mode of disclosure.]
- I-2 *Has there ever been anything -- or could you imagine there being anything -- that you could not or would not share with your husband? WHY could you not or would you not share this?* [It should be made clear to the subject that she need not reveal the substance of what would not be shared, merely the thinking or reasoning behind her decision.]

APPENDIX DMARITAL SATISFACTION SCALE (MSS)

Below you will find 30 statements which reflect feelings, thoughts, or attitudes that one might have about one's spouse or marital relationship. In reading each item, try to assess the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements listed. Please circle the one response (number) which captures your attitude most closely. Please do not leave any items blank.

1) I know where I stand with my spouse.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree		(Undecided)		Disagree

2) I worry a lot about my marriage.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree		(Undecided)		Disagree

3) If I could start over again, I would marry someone other than my present spouse.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree		(Undecided)		Disagree

\* 4) I feel that my spouse spends too much time complaining about things in his/her life (job, interpersonal interactions, etc.)

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree		(Undecided)		Disagree

5) I feel competent and fully able to handle my marriage.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Agree		(Undecided)		Disagree

\* One of the six items added by the experimenter. Not used in scoring marital satisfaction.

6) My marriage is too confining to suit me.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral (Undecided)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

7) I feel that I am "in a rut" in my marriage.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral (Undecided)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

\* 8) My spouse is too critical of me.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral (Undecided)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

9) I consider my marital situation to be as pleasant as it should be.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral (Undecided)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

10) My marriage has a bad effect on my health.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral (Undecided)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

11) I get discouraged trying to make my marriage work out.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral (Undecided)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

\* 12) My spouse tends to say things which are better left unsaid.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral (Undecided)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

\* One of the six items added by the experimenter.

13) My marriage gives me more real personal satisfaction than anything else I do.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral (Undecided)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

14) I think my marriage gets more difficult for me each year.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral (Undecided)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

15) My spouse gets me badly flustered and jittery.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral (Undecided)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

\* 16) When my spouse raises a delicate issue or subject about which I may be sensitive, he/she does so in such a way that allows me to reflect and consider it rather than just get angry.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral (Undecided)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

17) I have made a success of my marriage so far.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral (Undecided)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

18) I sometimes wish that I had not married my present spouse.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral (Undecided)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

19) My spouse inspires me to do my best work.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral (Undecided)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

\* One of the six items added by the experimenter.

- \* 20) My spouse shares too many of his/her insecurities with me.
- |                |       |                     |          |                   |
|----------------|-------|---------------------|----------|-------------------|
| 1              | 2     | 3                   | 4        | 5                 |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral (Undecided) | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
- 21) The future of my marriage looks promising to me.
- |                |       |                     |          |                   |
|----------------|-------|---------------------|----------|-------------------|
| 1              | 2     | 3                   | 4        | 5                 |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral (Undecided) | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
- 22) I am really interested in my spouse.
- |                |       |                     |          |                   |
|----------------|-------|---------------------|----------|-------------------|
| 1              | 2     | 3                   | 4        | 5                 |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral (Undecided) | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
- 23) I get along well with my spouse.
- |                |       |                     |          |                   |
|----------------|-------|---------------------|----------|-------------------|
| 1              | 2     | 3                   | 4        | 5                 |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral (Undecided) | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
- \* 24) My spouse tends to share unpleasant thoughts and/or feelings with me at times when I feel unable to cope with them effectively.
- |                |       |                     |          |                   |
|----------------|-------|---------------------|----------|-------------------|
| 1              | 2     | 3                   | 4        | 5                 |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral (Undecided) | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
- 25) My marriage helps me toward the goals I have set for myself.
- |                |       |                     |          |                   |
|----------------|-------|---------------------|----------|-------------------|
| 1              | 2     | 3                   | 4        | 5                 |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral (Undecided) | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
- 26) My spouse is willing to make helpful improvements in our relationship.
- |                |       |                     |          |                   |
|----------------|-------|---------------------|----------|-------------------|
| 1              | 2     | 3                   | 4        | 5                 |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral (Undecided) | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
- \* One of the six items added by the experimenter.

27) My spouse lacks respect for me.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral (Undecided)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

28) I have definite difficulty confiding in my spouse.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral (Undecided)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

29) Most of the time, my spouse understands the way that I feel.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral (Undecided)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

30) I am definitely satisfied with my spouse.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral (Undecided)	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

\*\*\*\*\*

A) Have you ever been in individual counseling or therapy? \_\_\_\_\_  
If yes, for how long? \_\_\_\_\_

B) Have you and your spouse ever been in marital counseling? \_\_\_\_\_  
If yes, for how long? \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX ELETTER OF INTRODUCTION TO SUBJECTS

**HELLO AGAIN!** Hopefully you met me at a recent faculty meeting and you have been enticed into participating in my research project. If so, I'd like to thank you in advance and ask you to fill out the attached form, place it in the envelope, and drop it in the checkered box in the mailroom.

If you haven't met me, or if you are still undecided, read the information below and **PLEASE CONSIDER PARTICIPATING!** As I indicate, I think you will find it interesting and enjoyable. I can certainly tell you that it would be an **enormous** help to me!

\*\*\*\*\*

WHO AM I? My name is Ines Wessman. I am a graduate student in clinical psychology at the City University of New York. This research is part of the work that I am doing for my final thesis.

WHAT IS THIS PROJECT ABOUT? This study concerns the ways in which married individuals handle various aspects of communication with their spouses.

WHAT WILL THIS ENTAIL? The study consists of a brief interview and two questionnaires. There is also a short form for your spouse to fill out at home (takes ~ 10 min.).  
*I will arrange our meeting time at school, at your convenience, during lunch, "free" periods, or after school.*

WHAT WILL YOU GET OUT OF THIS? (Besides the good feeling that comes from helping out a poor struggling graduate student ...)

- \* *An interesting opportunity to reflect* on how you think about and talk about a number of issues. Past participants have found it an interesting, enjoyable, thought-provoking experience.
- \* *The final results of the study*, which might interest you.
- \* *A donation of \$10* in your name to the school fund, as a small token of my appreciation.

IS THIS STUDY CONFIDENTIAL? YES! Responses are confidential and used anonymously only for the purposes of this research.

HOW DO YOU SIGN UP? Complete the attached form and place it in the checkered box in the mailroom. Once I have your name and number, I'll call to arrange a meeting time.

HOW DO YOU CONTACT ME IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

My address: Ines Wessman  
727 Bronx River Rd., #2K  
Bronxville, N.Y. 10708

My phone #: (914)  
776-7720

APPENDIX FSUBJECT CONSENT FORM

*I agree to participate as a subject in Ines Hessman's dissertation research project. She has explained the general nature of this research and my participation in it. I understand that I will be completing two questionnaires and a brief interview. I also understand that my responses will be confidential and will be used anonymously and only for the purposes of this research.*

---

FULL NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

---

SIGNATURE

---

DATE

---

WITNESS' NAME (EXPERIMENTER)

---

WITNESS' SIGNATURE

APPENDIX GLETTER OF EXPLANATION AND INTRODUCTION TO SPOUSE

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my dissertation research by completing the enclosed questionnaire. The survey consists of 30 items and should take you about 10 minutes to fill out. The information below gives you a brief summary of who I am, what this project is about, and what you need to do.

WHO AM I? My name is Ines Wessman. I am a graduate student in clinical psychology at the City University of New York. This research is part of the work that I am doing for my final thesis.

WHAT IS THIS PROJECT ABOUT? This study concerns various aspects of marital communication. I'll be able to provide you and your spouse with more detailed information about this project after I have received all of your forms.

IS THIS STUDY CONFIDENTIAL? **YES!!** *Responses to all research items are strictly confidential and are used anonymously and only for the purpose of this research. I will NOT share your responses with your spouse or his/hers with you.*

DO I FILL THIS OUT WITH MY SPOUSE? No. For the purpose of research design, it is important that you and your spouse complete your forms independently.

WHAT DO I DO? Please complete the questionnaire, sign the consent form, place both items in the stamped envelope provided, and mail it back to me.

In closing, I thank you again for taking the time to contribute to my research. I will share the final results of this project with you when I have them. Meanwhile, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Ines Wessman  
727 Bronx River Rd., Apt. 2K  
Bronxville, N.Y. 10708

(914) 776-7720

APPENDIX H  
CONSENT FORM FOR SPOUSE

*I agree to participate as a subject in Ines Hessman's dissertaion research project. She has briefly explained (by letter) the nature of the research and I understand that I will be completing one short questionnaire. I also understand that my responses will be confidential and will be used anonymously and only for the purposes of this research.*

---

FULL NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

---

SIGNATURE

---

DATE

APPENDIX IDEBRIEFING/THANK YOU LETTER TO SUBJECT/SPOUSE PAIRS

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Thank you so much for having taken the time and interest to participate in my dissertation research project. I hope that you found it at least somewhat interesting.

As promised, I would now like to share with you a more detailed description of the research. I explained in my earlier contact with you that I was studying communication patterns within marriage. I specifically am interested in the relationship between negative self-disclosure and marital satisfaction.

Self-disclosure is defined in the literature as the sharing of private thoughts, feelings or attitudes. Such thoughts or feelings might involve oneself, others, or general life experiences. My study focuses on *negative* self-disclosures (ie. the sharing of negative (or critical) thoughts and/or feelings pertaining to oneself, one's spouse, or other general themes. I am interested in the way different types of negative disclosure relate to marital satisfaction, and in the way that different couples go about making decisions about *which* negative thoughts and feelings should be shared, and in *specifically how* they go about sharing them.

The study is somewhat exploratory, so it is difficult for me to predict what the outcome will be. I certainly hope to learn more about how different couples negotiate this tricky, but important, aspect of marital communication. I am very grateful for your contribution to my research and will share the final results with you when I have them. (This might take some time, so don't wait by the phone!).

I will be giving you a quick call soon to see if you had any questions, comments, or concerns about the study. Meanwhile, of course, please feel free to call me at any time at the number below.

Thanks again,

Sincerely,

Ines Wessman  
727 Bronx River Rd., Apt. 2K  
Bronxville, N.Y. 10708

(914) 776-7720

## APPENDIX J

FREQUENCY & PERCENTAGE OF SUBJECT RESPONSE TO EACH NSDS ITEM

{GND} 1) You have had an unpleasant incident at work. You feel angry and upset about it.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1	2	3	4	5
	Very Unlikely				Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>			1	8	19
<u>Percent:</u>			3.6%	28.6%	67.9%

{NSR} 2) You took a test that measured your intellectual ability in some area that you believe is important. You are shaken when you learn that you scored in the lowest 10% of all those tested. You feel stupid and have a bad feeling about yourself as a result of the experience.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1	2	3	4	5
	Very Unlikely				Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>		1	4	6	17
<u>Percent:</u>		3.6%	14.3%	21.4%	60.7%

{CRS} 3) For some reason, you find yourself noticing your husband's appearance. His hair style and clothing are not attractive -- perhaps out of style or unkempt. This bothers you.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1	2	3	4	5
	Very Unlikely				Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>			4	10	14
<u>Percent:</u>			14.3%	35.7%	50.0%

- {NSR} 4) You overhear some co-workers unkindly mimicking something that you said at a recent meeting. Their portrayal horrifies you because it seems that in their eyes you are arrogant and somewhat rude. You are hurt, upset and embarrassed.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1 Very Unlikely	2	3	4	5 Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>	1	3	2	5	17
<u>Percent:</u>	3.6%	10.7%	7.1%	17.9%	60.7%

- {GND} 5) You went to a lecture/workshop and you felt that the presenter was pompous and that the workshop was a waste of time. You feel angry and annoyed.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1 Very Unlikely	2	3	4	5 Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>		2	2	6	18
<u>Percent:</u>		7.1%	7.1%	21.4%	64.3%

- {CRS} 6) Your husband was given an unusual opportunity to advance his career and income. It would have required a minimal effort on his part. He did nothing and lost the opportunity. You think that he is not ambitious enough and you are annoyed.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1 Very Unlikely	2	3	4	5 Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>		2	4	9	13
<u>Percent:</u>		7.1%	14.3%	32.1%	46.4%

{NSR} 7) You made a major mistake at work. several of your co-workers were aware of your error. You feel embarrassed and humiliated.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1 Very Unlikely	2	3	4	5 Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>		1	1	11	15
<u>Percent:</u>		3.6%	3.6%	39.3%	53.6%

{GND} 8) You feel very strongly about a particular national issue (eg. abortion, military spending, money allotted for education). News networks have been featuring this issue. You feel angry and upset.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1 Very Unlikely	2	3	4	5 Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>	1		1	9	17
<u>Percent:</u>	3.6%		3.6%	32.1%	60.7%

{CRS} 9) You are frustrated with some aspect of your husband's lovemaking.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1 Very Unlikely	2	3	4	5 Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>	1	2	6	11	8
<u>Percent:</u>	3.6%	7.1%	21.4%	39.3%	28.6%

{NSR} 10) Upon returning from an expensive vacation, you encounter a friend for whom you have enormous respect and admiration. As she describes her volunteer work with the elderly, you are impressed with her generosity and concern for others. You begin to question the way you spend your time and money and feel genuinely superficial and self-centered. You leave the encounter feeling that you are not a good person.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1 Very Unlikely	2	3	4	5 Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>		2	5	11	10
<u>Percent:</u>		7.1%	17.9%	39.3%	35.7%

{GND} 11) You encounter an acquaintance who talks a great deal and detains you. Your impatience and annoyance with this person increase as they drone on and on. You feel irritated and frustrated.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1 Very Unlikely	2	3	4	5 Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>	1	4	4	9	10
<u>Percent:</u>	3.6%	14.3%	14.3%	32.1%	35.7%

{CRS} 12) You and your husband both have had a hard week at work. Close mutual friends of yours are coming to dinner on Saturday. The house has to be cleaned, the shopping needs to be done, and the dinner has to be prepared. Your husband has not volunteered to do any of it. You are feeling angry and resentful.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1 Very Unlikely	2	3	4	5 Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>			2	4	22
<u>Percent:</u>			7.1%	14.3%	78.6%

{NSR} 13) You went to a party with your husband and felt that you could not get into a festive mood. You did not feel witty or interesting and you fear that you made a bad impression. The experience leaves you concerned that you lack poise and are somewhat socially awkward. You are unhappy about this.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1	2	3	4	5
	Very Unlikely				Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>	1	2	7	8	10
<u>Percent:</u>	3.6%	7.1%	25.0%	28.6%	35.7%

{NSR} 14) Your employer sent you to a workshop at which you were to receive important training. You are supposed to share your new "expertise" with your colleagues at an upcoming meeting. You did not understand much of what was presented at the workshop and, as a result, are worried about performing poorly and looking foolish in front of your boss and co-workers. You have a sense of failure and inadequacy.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1	2	3	4	5
	Very Unlikely				Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>			2	12	14
<u>Percent:</u>			7.1%	42.9%	50.0%

{GND} 15) You have dinner with an old schoolmate who drinks too much and generally behaves in an unpleasant, discourteous manner at the restaurant where you are eating. You are embarrassed and annoyed.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1	2	3	4	5
	Very Unlikely				Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>			3	5	20
<u>Percent:</u>			10.7%	17.9%	71.4%

{CRS} 16) You and your husband go to a department store to return an item purchased there. A pleasant, young salesclerk tries to assist you, but informs you that "returns" are handled in a different part of the store. Your husband is annoyed that he must now wait in another line and makes a "scene" by loudly venting his frustration on the clerk. You feel that your husband was unreasonably demanding and excessively overbearing. You are embarrassed and angry about his behavior.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1	2	3	4	5
	Very Unlikely				Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>			4	8	16
<u>Percent:</u>			14.3%	28.6%	57.1%

{GND} 17) You take a route to and from work that takes you past the same homeless people. You feel a mixture of sadness, helplessness, frustration and annoyance.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1	2	3	4	5
	Very Unlikely				Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>			3	7	18
<u>Percent:</u>			10.7%	25.0%	64.3%

{CRS} 18) You always try to "make a fuss" over your husband on special occasions such as birthdays, job promotions, etc. Perhaps you buy him flowers, prepare his favorite meal, or take him out. You just received the "Teacher of the Year" award in your school district; it is a great honor and you are very proud. Except for a brief "That's great, honey," your husband barely has acknowledged your achievement. You are hurt, disappointed and a bit angry with him.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1	2	3	4	5
	Very Unlikely				Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>		2	4	4	18
<u>Percent:</u>		7.1%	14.3%	14.3%	64.3%

{CRS} 19) Your husband has developed a personal habit that you find unpleasant, unattractive, or offensive. You are bothered by this.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1 Very Unlikely	2	3	4	5 Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>		1	4	5	18
<u>Percent:</u>		3.6%	14.3%	17.9%	64.3%

{NSR} 20) You have just read a research report on female sexuality. It discusses an aspect of lovemaking about which you feel personally deficient. You are feeling unhappy and inadequate about some aspect of your sexual performance.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1 Very Unlikely	2	3	4	5 Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>	1	1	9	11	6
<u>Percent:</u>	3.6%	3.6%	32.1%	39.3%	21.4%

{NSR} 21) A well-meaning friend asks if "everything is okay," noting that you have been looking tired and pale. You have been feeling just fine, but, as you scrutinize yourself in the mirror later, you become genuinely concerned that you are not looking as attractive anymore. You are upset and bothered by this.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1 Very Unlikely	2	3	4	5 Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>	1	4	4	10	9
<u>Percent:</u>	3.6%	14.3%	14.3%	35.7%	32.1%

{GND} 22) You strongly disagree with the childrearing practices of one of your neighbors. Rather than teaching their children good values and respect for others, they buy them every new toy on the market, and allow them to behave in a rude and unruly manner. You think that they are failing in their responsibility to their children -- and to society -- by allowing them to grow into unpleasant, self-centered human beings. You are saddened, irritated and angered by this.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1 Very Unlikely	2	3	4	5 Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>		1	2	5	20
<u>Percent:</u>		3.6%	7.1%	17.9%	71.4%

{CRS} 23) You are at a party with your husband. He does or says something that seems to bother your hosts. You think that he was impolite and you are angry and embarrassed.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1 Very Unlikely	2	3	4	5 Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>			3	10	15
<u>Percent:</u>			10.7%	35.7%	53.6%

{GND} 24) In order to obtain a promotion at work, you must take a certain course. It will not be very difficult, but you dread it and resent the impingement on your private time. You are annoyed and resentful.

**HOW LIKELY OR UNLIKELY ARE YOU TO SHARE SUCH THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS WITH YOUR HUSBAND?**

	1 Very Unlikely	2	3	4	5 Very Likely
<u>Frequency:</u>				4	24
<u>Percent:</u>				14.3%	85.7%

## APPENDIX K

FREQUENCY & PERCENTAGE OF SUBJECT RESPONSE TO EACH MSS ITEM1) I know where I stand with my spouse.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	13	14	1		
<u>Percent:</u>	46.4%	50.0%	3.6%		

2) I worry a lot about my marriage.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>		2	1	11	14
<u>Percent:</u>		7.1%	3.6%	39.3%	50.0%

3) If I could start over again, I would marry someone other than my present spouse.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	1	1	4	4	18
<u>Percent</u>	3.6%	3.6%	14.3%	14.3%	64.3%

\* 4) I feel that my spouse spends too much time complaining about things in his/her life (job, interpersonal interactions, etc.)

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	1	1		10	16
<u>Percent:</u>	3.6%	3.6%		35.7%	57.1%

5) I feel competent and fully able to handle my marriage.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	15	9	2	1	1
<u>Percent:</u>	53.6%	32.1%	7.1%	3.6%	3.6%

\* One of the six items added by the experimenter.

6) My marriage is too confining to suit me.

	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
	Agree		(Undecided)		Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>			3	8	17
<u>Percent:</u>			10.7%	28.6%	60.7%

7) I feel that I am "in a rut" in my marriage.

	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
	Agree		(Undecided)		Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>		2	3	8	15
<u>Percent:</u>		7.1%	10.7%	28.6%	53.6%

\* 8) My spouse is too critical of me.

	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
	Agree		(Undecided)		Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	1	2	3	8	14
<u>Percent:</u>	3.6%	7.1%	10.7%	28.6%	50.0%

9) I consider my marital situation to be as pleasant as it should be.

	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
	Agree		(Undecided)		Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	11	7	4	4	2
<u>Percent:</u>	39.3%	25.0%	14.3%	14.3%	7.1%

10) My marriage has a bad effect on my health.

	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
	Agree		(Undecided)		Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>		3		5	20
<u>Percent:</u>		10.7%		17.9%	71.4%

\* One of the six items added by the experimenter.

11) I get discouraged trying to make my marriage work.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>		4	3	4	17
<u>Percent:</u>		14.3%	10.7%	14.3%	60.7%

\* 12) My spouse tends to say things which are better left unsaid.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	1	3	1	9	14
<u>Percent:</u>	3.6%	10.7%	3.6%	32.1%	50.0%

13) My marriage gives me more real personal satisfaction than anything else I do.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	8	8	4	6	2
<u>Percent:</u>	28.6%	28.6%	14.3%	21.4%	7.1%

14) I think my marriage gets more difficult for me each year.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	1		2	10	15
<u>Percent:</u>	3.6%		7.1%	35.7%	53.6%

15) My spouse gets me badly flustered and jittery.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	1		2	8	17
<u>Percent:</u>	3.6%		7.1%	28.6%	60.7%

\* One of the six items added by the experimenter.

- \* 16) When my spouse raises a delicate issue or subject about which I may be sensitive, he/she does so in such a way that allows me to reflect and consider it rather than just get angry.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	4	12	5	7	
<u>Percent:</u>	14.3%	42.9%	17.9%	25.0%	

- 17) I have made a success of my marriage so far.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	13	9	4	2	
<u>Percent:</u>	46.4%	32.1%	14.3%	7.1%	

- 18) I sometimes wish that I had not married my present spouse.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	1	6	2	2	17
<u>Percent:</u>	3.6%	21.4%	7.1%	7.1%	60.7%

- 19) My spouse inspires me to do my best work.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	13	10	2	3	
<u>Percent:</u>	46.4%	35.7%	7.1%	10.7%	

- \* 20) My spouse shares too many of his/her insecurities with me.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	1		1	10	16
<u>Percent:</u>	3.6%		3.6%	35.7%	57.1%

- \* One of the six items added by the experimenter.

21) The future of my marriage looks promising to me.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	18	5	3	1	1
<u>Percent:</u>	64.3%	17.9%	10.7%	3.6%	3.6%

22) I am really interested in my spouse.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	19	8		1	
<u>Percent:</u>	67.9%	28.6%		3.6%	

23) I get along well with my spouse.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	16	9	2	1	
<u>Percent:</u>	57.1%	32.1%	7.1%	3.6%	

\* 24) My spouse tends to share unpleasant thoughts and/or feelings with me at times when I feel unable to cope with them effectively.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>		2	5	13	8
<u>Percent:</u>		7.1%	17.9%	46.4%	28.6%

25) My marriage helps me toward the goals I have set for myself.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	12	14	1	1	
<u>Percent:</u>	42.9%	50.0%	3.6%	3.6%	

\* One of the six items added by the experimenter.

26) My spouse is willing to make helpful improvements in our relationship.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	8	13	4	2	1
<u>Percent:</u>	28.6%	46.4%	14.3%	7.1%	3.6%

27) My spouse lacks respect for me.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>		1	4	4	19
<u>Percent:</u>		3.6%	14.3%	14.3%	67.9%

28) I have definite difficulty confiding in my spouse.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>		1	4	7	16
<u>Percent:</u>		3.6%	14.3%	25.0%	57.1%

29) Most of the time, my spouse understands the way that I feel.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	12	10	4	1	1
<u>Percent:</u>	42.9%	35.7%	14.3%	3.6%	3.6%

30) I am definitely satisfied with my spouse.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	14	7	5		2
<u>Percent:</u>	50.0%	25.0%	17.9%		7.1%

## APPENDIX L

FREQUENCY & PERCENTAGE OF SPOUSE RESPONSE TO EACH MSS ITEM1) I know where I stand with my spouse.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	15	9	3	1	
<u>Percent:</u>	53.6%	32.1%	10.7%	3.6%	

2) I worry a lot about my marriage.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>		5	2	9	12
<u>Percent:</u>		17.9%	7.1%	32.1%	42.9%

3) If I could start over again, I would marry someone other than my present spouse.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>		2	3	3	20
<u>Percent</u>		7.1%	10.7%	10.7%	71.4%

\* 4) I feel that my spouse spends too much time complaining about things in his/her life (job, interpersonal interactions, etc.)

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	1	4	3	11	9
<u>Percent:</u>	3.6%	14.3%	10.7%	39.3%	32.1%

5) I feel competent and fully able to handle my marriage.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	13	10	1	3	1
<u>Percent:</u>	46.4%	35.7%	3.6%	10.7%	3.6%

\* One of the six items added by the experimenter.

6) My marriage is too confining to suit me.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>		1	2	10	15
<u>Percent:</u>		3.6%	7.1%	35.7%	53.6%

7) I feel that I am "in a rut" in my marriage.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	1	3	2	7	15
<u>Percent:</u>	3.6%	10.7%	7.1%	25.0%	53.6%

\* 8) My spouse is too critical of me.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	1	4	3	12	8
<u>Percent:</u>	3.6%	14.3%	10.7%	42.9%	28.6%

9) I consider my marital situation to be as pleasant as it should be.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	11	8	3	6	
<u>Percent:</u>	39.3%	28.6%	10.7%	21.4%	

10) My marriage has a bad effect on my health.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>		1	1	6	20
<u>Percent:</u>		3.6%	3.6%	21.4%	71.4%

\* One of the six items added by the experimenter.

11) I get discouraged trying to make my marriage work.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>		3	1	5	19
<u>Percent:</u>		10.7%	3.6%	17.9%	67.9%

\* 12) My spouse tends to say things which are better left unsaid.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>		7	2	12	7
<u>Percent:</u>		25.0%	7.1%	42.9%	25.0%

13) My marriage gives me more real personal satisfaction than anything else I do.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	7	14	2	5	
<u>Percent:</u>	25.0%	50.0%	7.1%	17.9%	

14) I think my marriage gets more difficult for me each year.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	2	1	3	9	13
<u>Percent:</u>	7.1%	3.6%	10.7%	32.1%	46.4%

15) My spouse gets me badly flustered and jittery.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>		2		11	15
<u>Percent:</u>		7.1%		39.3%	53.6%

\* One of the six items added by the experimenter.

- \* 16) When my spouse raises a delicate issue or subject about which I may be sensitive, he/she does so in such a way that allows me to reflect and consider it rather than just get angry.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	3	11	4	10	
<u>Percent:</u>	10.7%	39.3%	14.3%	35.7%	

- 17) I have made a success of my marriage so far.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	11	12	3	1	1
<u>Percent:</u>	39.3%	42.9%	10.7%	3.6%	3.6%

- 18) I sometimes wish that I had not married my present spouse.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>		4	3	2	19
<u>Percent:</u>		14.3%	10.7%	7.1%	67.9%

- 19) My spouse inspires me to do my best work.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	9	11	6	2	
<u>Percent:</u>	32.1%	39.3%	21.4%	7.1%	

- \* 20) My spouse shares too many of his/her insecurities with me.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	1	4	3	15	5
<u>Percent:</u>	3.6%	24.3%	10.7%	53.6%	17.9%

- \* One of the six items added by the experimenter.

21) The future of my marriage looks promising to me.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	15	8	4	1	
<u>Percent:</u>	53.6%	28.6%	14.3%	3.6%	

22) I am really interested in my spouse.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	16	10	1	1	
<u>Percent:</u>	57.1%	35.7%	3.6%	3.6%	

23) I get along well with my spouse.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	14	11	2	1	
<u>Percent:</u>	50.0%	39.3%	7.1%	3.6%	

\* 24) My spouse tends to share unpleasant thoughts and/or feelings with me at times when I feel unable to cope with them effectively.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>		3	5	16	4
<u>Percent:</u>		10.7%	17.9%	57.1%	14.3%

25) My marriage helps me toward the goals I have set for myself.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	8	13	4	2	1
<u>Percent:</u>	28.6%	46.4%	14.3%	7.1%	3.6%

\* One of the six items added by the experimenter.

26) My spouse is willing to make helpful improvements in our relationship.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	10	16	1	1	
<u>Percent:</u>	35.7%	57.1%	3.6%	3.6%	

27) My spouse lacks respect for me.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>		2	2	7	17
<u>Percent:</u>		7.1%	7.1%	25.0%	60.7%

28) I have definite difficulty confiding in my spouse.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	1	2	2	12	11
<u>Percent:</u>	3.6%	7.1%	7.1%	42.9%	39.3%

29) Most of the time, my spouse understands the way that I feel.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	7	14	3	4	
<u>Percent:</u>	25.0%	50.0%	10.7%	14.3%	

30) I am definitely satisfied with my spouse.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral (Undecided)	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
<u>Frequency:</u>	16	5	5	2	
<u>Percent:</u>	57.1%	17.9%	17.9%	7.1%	

## APPENDIX M

TABLES 5A-5G  
I-TESTS FOR ALL HYPOTHESES USING COMBINED SUBJECT/SPOUSE  
MSS RATINGS AS DEFINITION OF SATISFACTION

Table 5A -- I-Test for HYP-1  
Comparison of Total Negative Disclosures (TND)

	# Cases	Mean	Standard Dev.	t Value	df	2-tail Prob.
<u>Less Satis.</u>	14	102.36	10.42			
<u>More Satis.</u>	14	104.64	7.09	-.68	26	*.503
						* Not Significant

Table 5B -- I-Test for HYP-2a  
Comparison of Frequency of General Negative Disclosure (GND)

	# Cases	Mean	Standard Dev.	t Value	df	2-tail Prob.
<u>Less Satis.</u>	14	36.35	3.02			
<u>More Satis.</u>	14	35.50	2.96	.76	26	*.455
						* Not Significant

Table 5C -- I-Test for HYP-2b  
Comparison of Frequency of Negative Self-Reference (NSR)

	# Cases	Mean	Standard Dev.	t Value	df	2-tail Prob.
<u>Less Satis.</u>	14	32.21	4.76			
<u>More Satis.</u>	14	33.50	3.80	-.79	26	*.437
						* Not Significant

Table 5D -- I-Test for HYP-2c  
Comparison of Frequency of Criticism of Spouse (CRS)

	# Cases	Mean	Standard Dev.	t Value	df	2-tail Prob.
<u>Less Satis.</u>	14	33.79	5.41			
<u>More Satis.</u>	14	35.64	3.84	-1.02	26	*.304
						* Not Significant

Table 5E -- T-Test for HYP-3a  
Comparison of Proportion of General Neg. Disclosure (GND)

	<u>#</u> <u>Cases</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard</u> <u>Dev.</u>	<u>t</u> <u>Value</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>2-tail</u> <u>Prob.</u>
<u>Less Satis.</u>	14	35.69	2.95	1.73	26	*.095
<u>More Satis.</u>	14	33.96	2.30			

\* Not Significant

Table 5F -- T-Test for HYP-3b  
Comparison of Proportion of Negative Self-Reference (NSR)

	<u>#</u> <u>Cases</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard</u> <u>Dev.</u>	<u>t</u> <u>Value</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>2-tail</u> <u>Prob.</u>
<u>Less Satis.</u>	14	31.40	2.66	-.59	26	*.561
<u>More Satis.</u>	14	31.99	2.64			

\* N.S. = Not Significant

Table 5G -- T-Test for HYP-3c  
Comparison of Proportion of Criticism of Spouse (CRS)

	<u>#</u> <u>Cases</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard</u> <u>Dev.</u>	<u>t</u> <u>Value</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>2-tail</u> <u>Prob.</u>
<u>Less Satis.</u>	14	32.91	3.30	-.98	26	*.336
<u>More Satis.</u>	14	34.05	2.83			

\* N.S. = Not Significant

## APPENDIX N

## TABLES 6A-6G

I-TESTS FOR ALL HYPOTHESES USING SUBJECT MSS AS DEF. OF SAT.

Table 6A -- I-Test for HYP-1  
Comparison of Total Negative Disclosures (TND)

	<u>#</u> <u>Cases</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard</u> <u>Dev.</u>	<u>t</u> <u>Value</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>2-tail</u> <u>Prob.</u>
<u>Less Satis.</u>	13	102.62	10.80			
<u>More Satis.</u>	15	104.27	6.98	-.49	26	*.630

\* Not Significant

Table 6B -- I-Test for HYP-2a  
Comparison of Frequency of General Negative Disclosure (GND)

	<u>#</u> <u>Cases</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard</u> <u>Dev.</u>	<u>t</u> <u>Value</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>2-tail</u> <u>Prob.</u>
<u>Less Satis.</u>	13	36.08	2.96			
<u>More Satis.</u>	15	35.80	3.08	.24	26	*.811

\* Not Significant

Table 6C -- I-Test for HYP-2b  
Comparison of Frequency of Negative Self-Reference (NSR)

	<u>#</u> <u>Cases</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard</u> <u>Dev.</u>	<u>t</u> <u>Value</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>2-tail</u> <u>Prob.</u>
<u>Less Satis.</u>	13	32.54	4.79			
<u>More Satis.</u>	15	33.13	3.93	-.36	26	*.721

\* Not Significant

Table 6D -- I-Test for HYP-2c  
Comparison of Frequency of Criticism of Spouse (CRS)

	<u>#</u> <u>Cases</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard</u> <u>Dev.</u>	<u>t</u> <u>Value</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>2-tail</u> <u>Prob.</u>
<u>Less Satis.</u>	13	34.00	5.57			
<u>More Satis.</u>	15	35.33	3.89	-.74	26	*.464

\* Not Significant

Table 6E -- I-Test for HYP-3a  
Comparison of Proportion of General Neg. Disclosure (GND)

	# Cases	Mean	Standard Dev.	t Value	df	2-tail Prob.
<u>Less Satis.</u>	13	35.33	2.72	.90	26	*.377
<u>More Satis.</u>	15	34.39	2.77			

\* Not Significant

Table 6F -- I-Test for HYP-3b  
Comparison of Proportion of Negative Self-Reference (NSR)

	# Cases	Mean	Standard Dev.	t Value	df	2-tail Prob.
<u>Less Satis.</u>	13	31.64	2.61	-.10	26	*.919
<u>More Satis.</u>	15	31.74	2.72			

\* N.S. = Not Significant

Table 6G -- I-Test for HYP-3c  
Comparison of Proportion of Criticism of Spouse (CRS)

	# Cases	Mean	Standard Dev.	t Value	df	2-tail Prob.
<u>Less Satis.</u>	13	33.03	3.41	-.71	26	*.485
<u>More Satis.</u>	15	33.87	2.81			

\* N.S. = Not Significant

## APPENDIX O

## TABLES 7A-7G

I-TESTS FOR ALL HYPOTHESES USING SPOUSE MSS AS DEF. OF SAT.

Table 7A -- I-Test for HYP-1  
Comparison of Total Negative Disclosures (IND)

	# Cases	Mean	Standard Dev.	t Value	df	2-tail Prob.
<u>Less Satis.</u>	14	100.36	9.91			
<u>More Satis.</u>	14	106.64	6.49	-1.99	26	*.058

\* Not Significant

Table 7B -- I-Test for HYP-2a  
Comparison of Frequency of General Negative Disclosure (GND)

	# Cases	Mean	Standard Dev.	t Value	df	2-tail Prob.
<u>Less Satis.</u>	14	35.86	3.01			
<u>More Satis.</u>	14	36.00	3.04	- .13	26	*.901

\* Not Significant

Table 7C -- I-Test for HYP-2b  
Comparison of Frequency of Negative Self-Reference (NSR)

	# Cases	Mean	Standard Dev.	t Value	df	2-tail Prob.
<u>Less Satis.</u>	14	31.93	4.63			
<u>More Satis.</u>	14	33.79	3.83	-1.16	26	*.258

\* Not Significant

Table 7D -- I-Test for HYP-2c  
Comparison of Frequency of Criticism of Spouse (CRS)

	# Cases	Mean	Standard Dev.	t Value	df	2-tail Prob.
<u>Less Satis.</u>	14	32.57	5.36			
<u>More Satis.</u>	14	36.86	2.69	-2.68	26	*.013

\* Significant at .01 level

Table 7E -- I-Test for HYP-3a  
Comparison of Proportion of General Neg. Disclosure (GND)

	# Cases	Mean	Standard Dev.	t Value	df	2-tail Prob.
<u>Less Satis.</u>	14	35.87	2.82	2.16	26	*.040
<u>More Satis.</u>	14	33.76	2.30			

\* Significant at the .05 level

Table 7F -- I-Test for HYP-3b  
Comparison of Proportion for Negative Self-Reference (NSR)

	# Cases	Mean	Standard Dev.	t Value	df	2-tail Prob.
<u>Less Satis.</u>	14	31.78	3.08	.16	26	*.874
<u>More Satis.</u>	14	31.62	2.17			

\* Not significant

Table 7G -- I-Test for HYP-3c  
Comparison of proportion of Criticism of Spouse (CRS)

	# Cases	Mean	Standard Dev.	t Value	df	2-tail Prob.
<u>Less Satis.</u>	14	32.35	3.33	-2.06	26	*.049
<u>More Satis.</u>	14	34.61	2.40			

\* Significant at the .05 level

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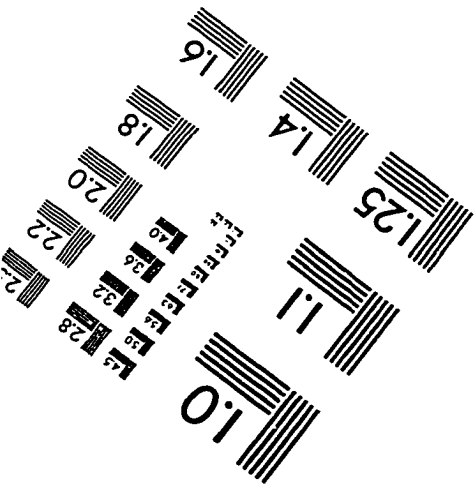
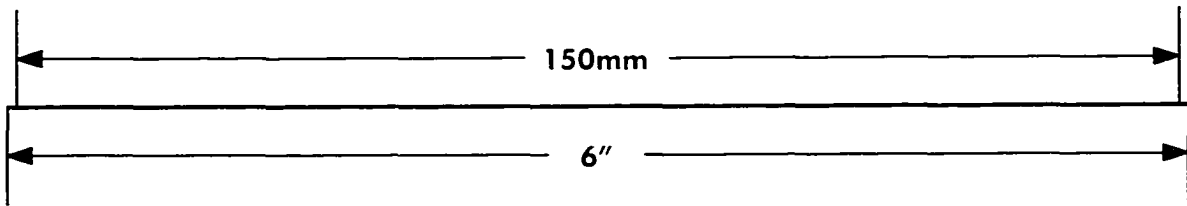
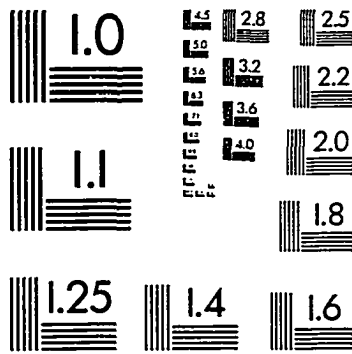
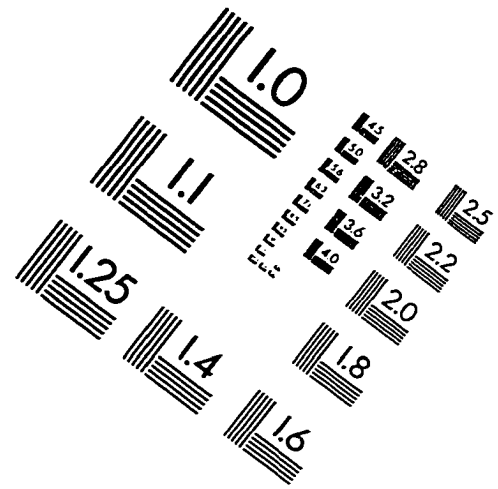
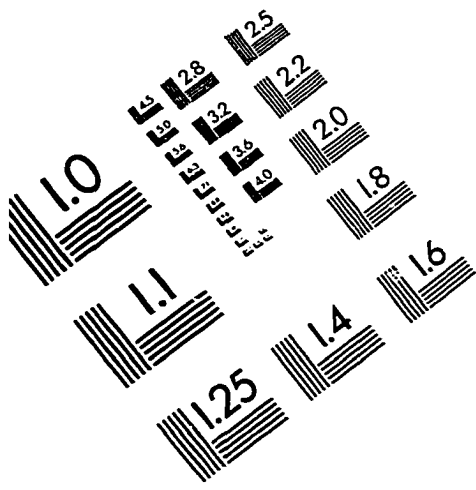
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