

Vietnamese Couples' Perceptions of the Factors that Contribute to Satisfaction in Long-Term Marriages

by

Thi My Dung Le

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
the University of Manitoba
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the factors that contribute to long-term marital satisfaction of Vietnamese participant couples living in Manitoba, Canada to learn how they adjusted their lives through the immigration process and to acquire a greater awareness, academically and professionally, of the issues that have affected their marriages.

I utilized qualitative research because its methods respect diversity and can respond to the multiple needs of the participants. It permits one to describe thoroughly and communicate human interaction and other complicated aspects of family through in-depth interviews.

My findings indicate some differences and some similarities with marriages described in the western literature. The differences are that, to the participating families, the family unit is their first concern. They sacrificed themselves for the benefit of the family, with the goal of raising successful children as the criterion of their long-term marital satisfaction. Another factor is the Vietnamese Community which they joined after having immigrated to Canada. Their connections and activities within that community also contributed to their marital satisfaction.

Other similar factors are harmony, mutual acceptance, intimacy, and the sexual relationship, friendship and laughter, religion, and commitment.

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CHAPTER ONE. Introduction

This study explores what factors contribute to satisfaction in long-term marriages in the Vietnamese population of Manitoba, Canada. This thesis consists of five chapters, each concentrating on different aspects of the study. Chapter one is an overview of the study; chapter two presents literature on marriage and satisfaction of long-term marriages; chapter three discusses the methodology used; chapter four is a discussion of the findings and the key factors contributing to Vietnamese satisfactory long-term marriages; chapter five is the contributions and implication of my study.

1.1. Overview and Purposes of the Study

Social workers commit to “enhancing, restoring or modifying the psychosocial functioning of people, individually, in families, in groups or in communities to enable them to reach their full potential in harmony with their environment and the wider society” (Christensen, 1999, p. 293). I believe that helping immigrants acquire a sense of belonging and helping them integrate into Canadian society is important. Studying the satisfaction of long-term marriage enhances the understanding of immigrant family relations, as well as filling a need of the social work profession because, as a number of authors point out, cultural diversity is one of the major themes of social work practice (Ewalt, Freeman, Fortune, Poole & Witkins, 1999; Goldstein, 2000).

Although social work practitioners need to be culturally competent to work with diverse ethnic communities, they have been trained predominantly on the Western model (Cheung, 2005). As Razack (1999) indicates, in the last ten years, schools of social work

have recognized the issue of cultural diversity and their training programs have responded to the needs of a multicultural society. Canada's multicultural society requires social work students to learn to work effectively with these diverse populations. Studying the satisfaction of long- term marriage in the Vietnamese immigrant population can enhance knowledge in this area.

Canada is a multicultural country. Nearly one in four Canadians have come as an immigrant (Canada Census, 2006). Statistics Canada (2006) indicates that there has been a constant increase in the population entering Canada from East Asia, Southeast Asia and South Asia. Vietnam is one of the major source countries for family reunification along with the Philippines, India, the United States, and China (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2002). In the period 1982 to 2001, 122,055 Vietnamese immigrated to Canada (Canada Census, 2001).

Cheung (2005) indicates that research on the strengths of marriage is small compared to the literature on divorce. She also states that between 1965 and 1987 the divorce rate in Canada increased from being one of the lowest in the industrial countries, to one of the highest. Statistics Canada shows that in 2006 for the Canadian population as a whole there were 1,629,490 divorced people of both sexes. In 2002, the rate is 10 divorces for every 21 couples who married in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2003). These statistics suggest marriage is highly demanding and does not easily fulfill expectations (Sharlin, Kaslow and Hammerschmidt, 2000).

Krantzler and Krantzler (1992) indicate that breakups usually take place within the first 15 years of a marriage. Fisher (1992) reports that people are most likely to divorce in the first 4 years of marriage. In Northern Europe, the highest divorce rate occurs from 2 to 4 years after marriage (Lindstrom, 1992).

Despite the high divorce rate, people continue to marry and remarry (Lauer, Lauer & Kerr, 1990). Plechaty (1987) points out that 95% of adult Canadians marry at least once. In 2006, there were 15,793,063 married people of both sexes in the entire Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2006).

Cheung (2005) points out that marriage has different forms, structure, and meanings in different cultures and changes over time as well. Traditionally, marriage was recognized as human mating. In democratic societies, marriage has become more flexible (Mace, 1982; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995) and has changed from preserving the social order to fulfilling personal expectation (Cheung, 2005). In today's marriages, people marry and stay together for love, happiness and personal fulfillment. They seek something more than a reproductive environment (Barbach & Geisinger, 1994), and the definition of family includes common law, same sex, single parent families, and blended families.

Today, couples increasingly use the traditional wedding vow "till death do us part" and expect a long-term marriage (Karpel, 1994). Roberts (1979) finds that when people marry they plan to live together for a long time. There is a need to find how some people live in satisfying long-term marriages so that people and their families can learn to work through their difficulties and maintain more satisfying marriages.

Marital satisfaction is defined between and by husband and wife and is the mutual agreement on what constitutes satisfaction in their marriage. Marriage is a socially-constituted product of society and a couple's interaction constructs their marital relationship, and as social values change over time, so do marital relationships change over time (Cheung, 2005).

All people experience changes that influence their marital relationship, but immigrants have the added changes of moving to a new country and can be faced with a different social system, value system, beliefs, laws, living conditions and the changing spousal roles. Some get through the experiences with their relationships intact, some need help from social services to maintain their relationships and others abandon their marriages. It is of interest, maybe even necessary, to determine what factors keep Vietnamese couples in long-term satisfying relationships, so that social workers working with Vietnamese families can work with them more effectively.

This information is also relevant to those couples contemplating marriage, and who have been recently married, as well as those who have been married for a long time but are having difficulties. Premarital programs may also benefit from the research because it might provide valuable material about successful marriages.

1.2. Qualitative Research

This study uses the qualitative method with some concepts from grounded theory for data collection and analysis. Qualitative research assists people in discussing their experiences on their own terms instead of responding to pre-determined categories. Strauss and Corbin (1990) point out that qualitative research counts on observations and interviews to obtain data.

Tutty, Rothery and Grinnel (1996) indicate that qualitative research is respectful of diversity and different cultures and therefore it is the best approach to respond to the multiple needs of the participants. Qualitative research is suitable for describing and communicating human interaction and family experiences and the many complicated

aspects of the family lend themselves to understanding and appreciating through in-depth interviews of qualitative research.

1.3. Learning Goals

The goals of this study were:

1. To explore why the participating Vietnamese couples stay in their long-term marriages
2. To learn how the immigration process changed many aspects of their lives.
3. To explore how these couples adjusted to a new country in order to experience satisfaction in their long-term marriage.
4. To explore the factors that give participating Vietnamese couples satisfaction in their long-term marriage, because the existing research and literature on non-Western groups is scarce.
5. To ask the participating couples how they have been satisfied in their long-term marriage.
6. To seek, academically and professionally, a greater awareness of the issues related to marital satisfaction in the Vietnamese population.

1.4. Summary

This chapter presented an overview and the potential benefits of this study. The evolution of marriage from the traditional to the modern pattern was described. The qualitative methods used and my learning goals were also discussed.

This study contributes to the existing research and literature on non-Western groups. Refugee and immigrant populations that come to Canada, where they face many difficulties, can be helped by this study to adjust to a new country in order to experience satisfaction in their long term marriages.

CHAPTER TWO. Literature Review

This chapter discusses marital satisfaction, long-term marriage, Vietnamese family values and beliefs, and key factors that contribute to long-term marriages.

2.1. Marital Satisfaction

Many authors agree that marital quality and stability are key concepts in the literature on long-term marriage and that there is interplay between these two concepts (Lauer *et al*, 1990; Robinson & Blanton, 1993). Commitment does not equate with happiness (Gilford, 1986). Couples stay together for different reasons, such as children, fear of change, financial circumstances, religion or social and financial status. Many authors compare marital satisfaction with marital adjustment (Sporakowski and Hughston, 1978; Kaslow & Hammerschmidt, 1992) or marital happiness (Lauer & Lauer, 1986; Lauer *et al*, 1990).

Happiness in a marriage has different meanings for different couples. Some people think money and success are important keys giving couples a sense of happiness. Other people are content in their marriage when they feel good about themselves and about what they have accomplished (Sharlin *et al* 2000).

In order to achieve marital satisfaction, couples need to work on their relationship to maintain and enhance it throughout their lives (Dindia, 2000; Wiegel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999). Cheung (2005) indicates that in long-term marriage, the couple who constructed a more flexible gender relationship in the long course of marriage, felt satisfied in their marriage. "Marriage is a dynamic relationship" changing continually

(Sharlin *et al* 2000, p.7). Both partners bring their own values and beliefs to the marriage. A couple's perspective on marital satisfaction comes from the day-to-day experiences and the couple's marriage must endure the complexity of the couple's life. Marriage is influenced by the social and living environment of the people involved. Couples that have a strong fulfilling relationship tend to cope better with their crises and adversities and maintain their harmonious relationship longer than couples that don't have such a relationship (Krantzler & Krantzler, 1992; Robinson & Blanton, 1993).

A number of studies show that an ability to manage conflicts and good communication are key factors to achieving marital satisfaction (Olson, 1988; Storaasli & Markman, 1990; Sharlin, 1996). Other factors influencing the long-term stability of a marriage are self disclosure (Hendrick, 1981; Hansen & Schuldt, 1984), a shared mutual value system (Beavers, 1985; Murstein, 1980), equal, or perceived to be equal partners, give and take behaviour, power sharing and contributing to the marriage (Jacobson & Margolin, 1979; Beavers, 1985).

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) on their studies of American people indicate that marital satisfaction includes a sense of fulfillment, well-being, contentment, affection, and safety. Sharlin *et al* (2000) indicate that marital satisfaction comes with a sense of co-operation and mutual support, affection, honesty, and understanding. In general, when people feel good about themselves, their families, their fulfillment at work and their health, they feel content in their marriages. Mutual trust, respect and love are the key components in marital satisfaction (Roizblatt, Kaslow, Rivera, Fuchs, Conejero, C. & Zacharais (1999).

Kaslow, Hanson and Lundblad (1994, p. 534) point out the factors contributing to marital satisfaction are sharing "the same norms and values towards raising children...,

the capacity to see another's needs and interest, and deal with conflict in a flexible way".

Some studies on healthy marriages focus on early married life (Kaslow, 1981, 1982), while others focus on the relationship between happy childhoods and marital satisfaction (Roizblatt *et al*, 1999). Marital satisfaction may be different in degree and meaning to different people. It varies with the personality, temperament and stresses at different stages in the lives of the people involved. Their relationships are affected by having children, raising them through the teenage period and seeing them leave home. They may have had to face crises in their lives such as fleeing a country as refugees or leaving as an emigrant, changing jobs, retirement, illness, loss of status and income. The set of conflicts between parents and children in Vietnam are different from the ones experienced in Canada and therefore the immigrants may have difficulty dealing with them. Having a person become the non-traditional sole breadwinner or caregiver may be accepted by one couple, but may mean dissatisfaction to another couple. For example, traditionally Vietnamese men are the sole bread winner of their family and the women are stay-at-home wives or run a small business from home to make extra money. The husbands, who were in power, made a good income and had high social status and never did any household chores. However, in Canada the wives can easily get jobs while the husbands have a harder time finding jobs suitable for them. These husbands often ended up to taking whatever job were available. It may mean a low paying job without social status so that they have to do house work because their wives have jobs outside the house. These factors decreased their self esteem and affected their marriage relationship.

2.2. Long-term Marriage

Throughout the course of a couple's life, they are faced with times of happiness as well as times of hardship. In response, some couples divorce while others successfully create happy and fulfilling relationships in spite of the hardships encountered. In early studies, researchers focused on factors that contributed to long-term marriages (Schlesinger, 1982; Schlesinger and Mullaly, 1984). Throughout the 1980's, research studies contributed further to identify those factors, such as lifetime commitment to marriage, loyalty to spouse and the expectation of reciprocity and strong shared moral values. Fennell's (1987) study in the United States indicates that respect for the spouse as a best friend and companionship are factors that contribute to long-term marriage.

In the 1990s, the study of long-term marriage became more "rigorous" and "sophisticated" (Cheung, 1999, p. 17). A number of authors indicate that most long-term marriages are satisfactory (Billingsley, Lim and Jennings, 1995; Kaslow and Robinson, 1996a; Lauer *et al*, 1990; Mackinnon, Mackinnon and Franken, 1984). Kaslow and Robinson (1996a) point out that people who have lived together for 20 years or more have developed a cluster of characteristics and attributes that help them to manage difficult situations. Other researchers of long-term couples report that over 90% of participants were happy in their marriage (Stinnett, Carter and Montgomery, 1972; Schlesinger, 1982). Many authors found that the basic characteristics that contribute to satisfaction in a long-term marriage are similar philosophies of life and a shared mutual enjoyment of life (Sharlin, 1996; Kaslow and Hammerschmidt, 1992; Kaslow and Robinson, 1996a). Still other studies on long-term marriage have indicated that marital satisfaction implies a sense of camaraderie, contentment and overall good feelings,

affection and safety (Rowe and Meredith 1982; Lauer and Lauer 1986; Fenell 1993; Billingsley, Lim, and Jennings, 1995; Kaslow and Hammerschmidt, 1992; Cheung, 1999; Kaslow and Robinson 1996a; Sharlin, 1996, Roizblatt *et al*, 1999; Cohen, 1998; Gottman, 1993; Gottman, Coan, Carrere & Swanson, 1998; Karney & Bradbury, 2000).

A research project on marital satisfaction initiated by Florence Kaslow was adopted by the research committee of the International Family Therapy Association to study marital satisfaction of couples in long-term marriages in different countries on different continents, Africa, Europe, North America, South America and Asia (Sharlin *et al* 2000). Their findings, including the Asian and African studies, agreed with the results found in the western literature. The findings of this research indicate that the most important factors for long-term satisfying marriages are love, fidelity, respect, mutual trust and support. Their study also points out that couples who remain married have resources for coping with life's difficulties. These resources include a fulfilling togetherness, the feelings of well-being, affection, cooperation and loving friendship. They state that in long-term marriages there are common qualities that are found in various cultures and socioeconomic settings. Having a good relationship with parents, a happy childhood, and a common religion affect a marriage positively. Family structures, values and beliefs are transferred from one generation to the next and the individuals who have received a sense of stability, belonging and contentment from their family tend to replicate their parents' ways of living in their own lives.

Cheung (2005) studied the long-term satisfaction of Hong Kong Chinese and European Canadian couples in Canada. She found that the key factors that contribute to long-term satisfaction in marriage are being a confidante, enjoying doing things together, sharing joy and sorrow, respect, care and concern for each other. Security, financial

stability and fidelity, mutual trust, fulfillment of their responsibilities as a parent and a marital partner, and successfully raising a family are other factors that Cheung mentions. The couples Cheung studied indicated that having similar values and goals was crucial to their marriage and commitment. In the same study, Cheung points out that the Chinese use the term “fulfillment of responsibility or duties rather than commitment” (p. 293). Cheung (2005) indicates that for the Chinese, a successful marriage is one in which the family produces successful children. The participants’ children are involved in family matters such as finances, work and disputes. Children tie the family together and affect the married couples greatly. The parents’ common goals are building a strong family and giving priority to the success of their children. The parents’ satisfaction comes from achieving those family roles.

2.3. Vietnamese Family Values and Beliefs

Most Vietnamese believe in Tam Giao which is a merging of three religious systems: Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism (Hanh, 1967; Thien-An, 1975; Rutledge, 1985; Jamieson, 1993). The Tam Giao focuses on family relations. To the Vietnamese family, it is the main foundation on which the physical, mental and social stability of family members are secured (Rutledge, 1992). Pfeifer (1999) states that traditionally, the Vietnamese have had a high regard for the patrilineal extended family. The Vietnamese family hierarchy is influenced by the Confucian tradition, in which the relationship between a man and his wife and children is similar to a king and his servants. There are rules to guide people, for example, in the use of appropriate gestures in different situations during religious ceremonies such as marriages and funerals of family members

(Dorais, Le, & Huy, 1987). Culturally, Vietnamese are trained to have a strong sense of responsibility to family members. The family tie is the center of the Vietnamese belief system. They consider family as a group more important than the individuals that make up the family. Family is also the central means of economic and social support.

Pfeifer (1999) indicates that the traditional Vietnamese family is composed of grandparents on the father's side, parents, sons and unmarried daughters, uncles and aunts. They may all live together in one household. Each individual has his or her own duties and obligations. The father is the head of the family and he is always highly respected. The oldest son's responsibility is taking care of the elderly parents, and when his father passes away, he is expected to be the head of the family (Muzny 1989; Rutledge, 1992). Rutledge (1992) points out that the principles of filial piety, respect, and obligation to the family include taking care of elderly parents. Traditionally Vietnamese children were raised to obey their parents and elders. A Vietnamese boy or girl might love someone, but selecting a mate would be the job of grandparents or parents. Filial piety in this sense means that the girl or boy is to obey the decision of the elder. Therefore, most marriages were arranged (Rutledge, 1992; Muzny, 1989). Going against the family tradition resulted in negative consequences not just for the individuals concerned, but for the whole family (Jamieson, 1993).

2.4. Gender Roles

In Vietnamese tradition, men are trained to lead the family. They are responsible for decision making and maintaining family tradition. Women are trained to submit to their fathers or oldest brother when they are under his care, to serve their husband after

marriage, and to listen to their oldest son in widowhood (Pfeifer, 1999). A married woman's main role is to care for her husband and in-laws. She is expected to take care of the housework, cooking and child-rearing. The mother is responsible for keeping the peace in the family and managing family finances (Hickey, 1964; Rutledge, 1992). All family members give their salaries to the mother, and she makes financial decisions for the family as a whole (Pfeifer, 1999)

Many authors indicate that the traditional family is continuing among Vietnamese refugees and immigrants in Canada and the United States (Woon, 1986; Rutledge 1992; Hein, 1995). Kibria (1993), in her study of Vietnamese families in Philadelphia, points out that Vietnamese-Americans practice the collective family tradition of every one pooling resources and sharing them with the entire family. They also practice a cooperative approach towards activity among family members reflecting the unity of the family. Caplan, Whitmore, and Choy (1989) note that when the wives work outside the home the degree to which the husbands and children are involved in household chores depends on the husband's availability and attitudes and on the children's ages and gender. For instance, girls cook and clean the house, boys do the yard and outside work.

Johnson (1989) studied the performance of household tasks by Vietnamese refugees and indicates that Vietnamese family life changed after immigrating to Canada. The Vietnamese men have difficulty being the sole breadwinner so that the women have joined the labour force where they (women) or all (men and women) are exposed to the new values of gender equality. She points out that the sharing of house work has different meaning to her participants. For instance, when the wives do an activity 80% of the time, they consider both husbands and wives do the activity.

Coltrane (2000) points out that married men are more involved in housework when their wives work outside the home. The married women who work and contribute to family finances often have more decision-making power (Blumberg and Coleman, 1989). Married people who share housework and paid work outside the home have the potential for increased intimacy between them (Hood, 1983; Scanzoni, 1978).

Thorton and Young – Demarco (2001) point out that because married women contribute to family finances, both husbands and wives' attitudes and values move away from the traditional ones including marriage. These authors state that the number of people who believe that husbands should be breadwinners and wives homemakers has declined compared to the 1950s.

Amato, Johnson, Booth and Rogers (2003) indicate that the improvement of marital quality is associated with increasing family income, husband and wife having equal decision making opportunities, and more modern attitudes toward gender roles.

Kibria (1993) indicates that there is a strong belief that the unity of family provides an economic safety net. The unity of family is a reliable support for Vietnamese individuals in all circumstances (Hickey, 1964; Rutledge, 1992)

Among other traits, affection, feeling comfortable with one another, trust, honesty, security, understanding, commitment, closeness, good communication, and mutual respect are qualities necessary for satisfaction in marriage (Sharlin *et al* 2000). These traits are similar to those found in the studies of both Oriental and Western countries.

Discussions regarding the long-term marital satisfaction of Vietnamese couples with my co-workers, key people in the Vietnamese community and counselors of other agencies who also work with immigrant and refugee families indicate that in their view the majority of Vietnamese couples in Canada possess the above traits. My work with

immigrant and refugee families at Immigrant Women's Counseling Services supports that conclusion also.

2.5. Key Factors That Contribute to Long-term Marriages

The following are key factors that contribute to long-term marriage as found by studies of people from Africa, Europe, Asia, North America and South America.

2.5.1. Commitment

Many researchers have found that commitment, endurance, tolerance, courage, perseverance and patience are major factors in long term marriages (Kaslow and Hammerschmidt, 1992 – in the United States; Kaslow *et al* 1994 – in Sweden; Hammerschmidt and Kaslow, 1995 – in Germany; Sharlin, 1996 – in Israel).

Commitment involves the investment of time, energy and effort that couples put into building a relationship in daily life in good times as well as difficult times. These traits also describe couples who are determined to work together to promote mutual growth (Cole, 1985; Krantzler & Krantzler, 1992; Robinson & Blanton, 1993). All couples have to deal with adversity in life but the couples who accept changes survive (Goldberg, Green, Hof, Treat, & Westfall, April, 1985). Changes are a fact of life and couples who do not accept changes in their lives will endure their marriage as an undesirable relationship.

Many authors indicate that in order to achieve long-term marriage, individuals need to maintain their own identity and personality in the closeness and intimacy of the

marital relationship (Mace, 1982; Beavers, 1985; Robinson & Blanton, 1993; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995). Cheung (1999) points out that the literature consistently shows that it is hard work to maintain a long-term marriage and that it is important for couples to have the ability to balance togetherness and separateness. Middle-aged couples declare that humor and interest are the most important traits in their marriage relationship, while older couples tend to declare affection to be that trait (Gottman & Notarius, 2000). Commitment, companionship and interdependence increase as a couple ages (Rowe & Meredith, 1982). Willi (1992) states that long-term couples create common goals while maintaining their personal goals in the marriage (p. 122). Individuals who have not maintained a level of autonomy are often found to be in low quality marriage relationships (Cole, 1985).

2.5.2. Perceptual Congruence

Perceptual congruence is another key factor (Swensen & Trahaug, 1985; Kaslow & Hammerschmidt, 1992; Fenell, 1993) found in studies of long-term marriages in American people. Some studies point out that long-term couples highly agree on important life issues such as how to manage family finances, family in-laws, common goals and how to handle “life around the home” (Roberts, 1979; Lauer & Lauer, 1986). Lauer and Lauer (1986) studied 351 American couples in long-term marriages and found that the two key factors in the relationship were friendship and liking each other.

2.5.3. Companionship

Cheung (1999) shows that quality long-term marriages have a large measure of companionship. Other studies agree that this is one of the keys to long-term marriage (Sporakowski & Hughston, 1978; Ammons & Stinnett, 1980; Lauer *et al*, 1990; Fenell, 1993; Billingsley *et al*, 1995). Companionship involves the time couples spend together with an enjoyment and appreciation of one another (Cheung, 2005). These studies clearly show that for a marriage to be lasting and satisfying couples need to enjoy each other's company, appreciate each other's efforts and value the time they share together without pressure from the other partner. The "best friend" relationship was confirmed in a study on long-term marriages by Weishaus and Field (1988).

2.5.4. Sexual Expressions and Affect

Sexual activity and interest are an integral part of marriage. Expressing affection to one another, touching, fondling each other brings a sense of satisfaction (O'Sullivan, Lawrence and Byers, 1994). Studies found that in long-term marriage couples express their genuine feelings and share interests through pain and joy, in spite of what they may feel (Buehlman, Gottman & Katz, 1992; Willi, 1992; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995). Harper, Schaalje, and Sandberg (2000) state that physical and emotional intimacy between partners is an important key to marital satisfaction. Gottman and Notarius (2000) state that affect is one of the key factors contributing to marital satisfaction. The positive affect such as physical contact, laughter, approval, and affection are found to be important in a couple's relationship (Cheung, 2005). Gottman *et al* (1998) indicate that the positive affect couples express is strongly related to the stability and success of their

marriage. They consistently found that positive affect helps the de-escalation of conflicts.

Gottman and his colleagues studied more than two thousand couples and found that if the ratio of positive to negative interactions between married couples is at least 5:1, the negativity will not harm the relationship (Gottman, 1993, 1994; Gottman & Levenson, 1992). Cheung (2005) indicates that couples satisfied in their marriage add to their relationship by minimizing conflicts through respectful humor. Other studies indicate that respect, trust, honesty, forgiveness, security and having fun together are attributes of long-term marriages (Gilford, 1986; Krantzler & Krantzler, 1992; Barbach & Geisinger, 1994; Kaslow & Robinson, 1996b).

2.5.5. Conflict Management

Long-term married couples have a harmonious relationship even though they face challenges similar to those couples whose marriages do not last. Cheung (2005) indicates that disagreements and fights were an essential part of a marriage and couples express their feelings and misunderstandings through arguments. Gottman and Notarius (2000) point out that couples who are satisfied in their marriage can resolve conflicts and disagreement. How married couples go through day-to-day life experiences determines the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their marriages (Gottman, 1994; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995). Long-married couples state that they do not have much conflict (Swensen, Eskew & Kohlhepp, 1984; Lauer & Lauer, 1986) and Kaslow and Hammerschmidt (1992) point out that long-term couples have the ability to solve problems jointly because their approach to solving problems is to focus on the issues

rather than the partner while remaining calm and flexible. Crises need not terminate in negative results (Krantzler & Krantzler, 1992). Couples that have a broad sense of contentment, fulfillment, and safety in their relationships can overcome challenges and grow together. It is contentment and the good fit between the partners' wishes and wants that help these couples overcome whatever frustrations they may have.

In a review of the literature from 1952 to 2004 Billingsley, Lim, Caron, Harris and Canada (2005) identified nine themes that contribute to marital and family success. These qualities and themes are: permanence of relationship, love, sex, compatibility in personality, common interests, communication, decision-making, intimacy, and religion.

2.6. Summary

Compared to the literature of the 70's and 80's on marriage, the literature of the 90's pays more attention to the different factors that contribute to satisfaction in long-term marriage (Blaisure & Allen, 1995; Cheung, 1999; Krantzler & Krantzler, 1992; Robinson & Blanton, 1993; Sharlin *et al.*, 2000; Storaasli & Markman, 1990). Marital relationships exist in a temporal context and the perception of marital satisfaction changes in time and place. In order to provide effective programs and services, social service providers who work with immigrant couples need to pay attention and learn to understand the different cultural values conveyed by these clients.

CHAPTER THREE. Methodology

My study took place in Manitoba, Canada. I used the purposive and snowball sampling method beginning with an initial advertisement at the Buddhist temple and agencies that work with Vietnamese people. I sent the couples who responded positively to the advertisement a letter with more information. This was followed up with a phone call to arrange an in-person interview. Each person was interviewed individually, spouses separately from each other. All participants took part in the study voluntarily. At the conclusion of each interview, the participant was asked to suggest other couples of their social group with a background similar to his or hers, who might be interested in this study and the whole process of information letter to interview was repeated until sufficient interviews were done. Recruitment of participants stopped after the 12th interview when the data showed saturation. Six couples were interviewed, but only the four couples that met all the acceptance criteria were included in the study. The women of the two rejected couples stayed in their marriage for their children. Three of the participating couples knew each other because they went to the same Buddhist temple often.

3.1. Research Questions

The primary goal of this research was to determine which factors gave the respondent Vietnamese couples satisfaction in their long-term marriages. Pfeifer (1999) indicates that Vietnamese couples that moved to Canada from Vietnam experienced difficulties in the immigration process. They have had to adjust to the new environment,

values, beliefs and social systems. These new influences may have affected important aspects of their marriage relationships including division of household labour, decision making, resolution of conflicts and communication (Cheung, 2005). What makes them stay with each other for so long and keeps them satisfied in their marriage? How did they adjust to the new country as well as to the changes in gender roles? Specific research questions were designed after a review of the relevant literature, discussions with social workers in the area of family relations, and my proposal committee and informal conversations with my colleagues. The following questions were discussed with the respondents

1. What makes you stay together?
2. How did the immigration process affect your marriage?
3. How did you adjust to the new environment, new culture and social systems?
4. Are you satisfied with your marriage?
5. What does marital satisfaction mean to you?
6. What are the key factors that are perceived to be contributing to your long-term marital satisfaction?
7. What do you do to achieve marital satisfaction in your marriage?
8. How did you raise your children in the Canadian society?
9. How does involvement with the Vietnamese community contribute to your marital satisfaction?
10. How does religion affect your marital satisfaction?
11. How do you handle household chores? Who does what?
12. How do you make major decisions?
13. Do you consult one another on your decisions?

14. How do you express affection to each other?
15. When you are under stress as a couple, what do you do?
16. Do you have difficulty in finding ways to solve your marital problems? Explain.

3.2. Qualitative Research

The methodological framework for this study was qualitative research. Franklin (1996) indicates that qualitative research has been gaining acceptance in areas such as marriage, family therapy, counseling and social work. As social work practitioner, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the couples' experiences, because some aspects of their marriage will be unique to each couple (Padgett, 1998; Tutty *et al*, 1996).

Since complex details of a phenomenon are hard to convey with a quantitative approach, the qualitative method is preferable and captures people's lived experience (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Padgett (1998) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) stress that qualitative methods are useful for discovering and understanding what lies behind many social phenomena about which little is known. The qualitative methodology permits insightful study of diverse phenomena (Allen, Bleiszner & Roberto, 2000; Durodoye, 1997; Wu, Enders & Ham, 1997). Since there is very limited research literature about Vietnamese couples and their long-term marriages, a qualitative approach was suitable for this project.

Since such studies are conducted in the real environment of the participants' daily lives, the data collected are influenced by the participants' experiences. Strauss and Corbin (1990) point out that the skills required for doing qualitative research include "theoretical and social sensitivity, the ability to maintain analytical distance while at the

same time drawing upon past experience and theoretical knowledge to interpret what is seen, astute powers of observation and good interactional skills” (p.18). Yegidis, Weinback and Morrison (1996) state that there are similarities in qualitative research and social work interviews. The author conducted all the interviews for this study. In the interviews conducted for this study I spoke the same language and shared the same culture as the target participants fulfilling the requirement of Tutty *et al*, (1999), that “the only people who should study a culture should be a member of that culture” (p.18).

Some concepts from grounded theory –as well as other qualitative research- have been incorporated into this study. These concepts include: data collection, constant comparison, data analysis, coding and memo writing. Grounded theory is based on the theories of symbolic interaction: People create their own meanings for their experiences based on their interactions with others (Yegidis *et al*, 1996). As data are collected they are analyzed for theoretical categories and as more data is collected, the analysis are repeated and further meaning and interrelationships are obtained (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

3.3. Data Collection

Charmaz (2001) points out that “grounded theory methods are developed by a set of data collection and analytic procedures. You start with an area of study and then build your theoretical analysis on what you discover to be relevant in the actual world that you study within this area” (p. 355). Rafuls (1994) indicates that in grounded theory, data collection and data analysis are intertwined because analysis begins while data are still

being collected. Data collection may include in-depth interviews with participants, direct observations and document analysis by the researcher.

In this study, in-depth interviews were conducted by using open-ended prepared questions and probes to aid the participants' accounts of their experiences as done by Rogers and Bouey (1996). To facilitate trust and keep participants interested in the topic, issues that were important to the interviewees were also discussed in an interview.

The primary purpose of all research interviewing is to collect accurate data about some human phenomenon, usually behavior, attitudes, perceptions, or beliefs of people. In qualitative research, the researcher hopes to find out how people experience some phenomenon or experience, to learn its meaning or essence, for them. In contrast, quantitative research uses the interview to accurately measure some phenomenon (Yegidis *et al*, 1996, p.129).

In qualitative research, interviewing is the favorite method of collecting data (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Rogers and Bouey (1996) also point out that interviewing can be one of the most effective methods of data gathering in the social work field. Data can be in the form of transcripts of interviews, audiotapes, field notes, memos and journals. Lavoie (2001) indicates that researchers can make an entry in a journal after the first interview is conducted. The journal was used as a guide to further exploration in the next interview and it is a useful tool to observe themes that are taking shape.

For this study, I asked participants detailed and extensive data to get clear material to work as suggested by Charmaz (2001). A thick description of personal experience of

the participants was written to facilitate an understanding of what they mean and how they define their experience (Charmaz 2001). Then I interpreted the data from their points of view. Memo writing, interviewer's transcriptions, and journals helps to produce rich data. After the interview, a description of the situation, the interaction of participants and researchers, and the researcher's perception of how an interview went was added in the journal to help generate a rich data set which in turn helped discover what participants intended to say when sharing their experiences. Rich data also permitted better tracing of events and making comparisons within the data set.

In this study, the data collection was stopped after the eighth interview because my observations and field notes indicated that no new insights were being presented. This criterion was suggested by Taylor and Bogdan (1984).

3.3.1. The Sample Selection Criteria

The selection criteria were:

1. Husband and wife were from North, Central, or South Vietnam
2. They had to be in their first marriage and have children.
3. The couple must have been married for at least 20 years at the time of the interview.
4. The couples must have been living in Manitoba, Canada for at least 5 years at the time of the interview.
5. The couple must be ethnic Vietnamese and they may, but need not, have a formal education.
6. The couples have to identify themselves as being in a satisfying marriage.

7. The couple may be immigrant or refugee.
8. The couple must be in a non-clinical population.

Items 2 and 8 define a satisfactory marriage for the purpose of this study. I chose the cut off point as 20 years because the Vietnamese population in Manitoba is small, 2,160 people (Statistics Canada 1996), and because break ups usually take place within the first 15 years of a marriage (Krantzler & Krantzler, 1992).

3.3.2. The Interviews

To ensure individuals the freedom to express their feelings and their experiences, each of eight people were interviewed one by one and face to face. Each interview dealt with personal matters; both joy and pain were discussed. Depending on the participant's availability, I scheduled the interview to be at the participant's home at his or her convenience. As each interview provided insights, different questions were asked in subsequent interviews as suggested by Lavoie (2001). I transcribed and translated the first two interviews (one couple), then did the first-level coding and got feedback from my advisor, and obtained more ideas for the rest of the coding.

Weiss (1994) indicates that interviewers should provide basic information about themselves. Padgett (1998) points out that personal disclosure by the interviewer is unavoidable in qualitative research and that the degree of self disclosure depends on the wishes and sensitivities of the respondents and on the researcher's own comfort level with such disclosure. She stresses that when the researcher discloses personal information, it should be done in the context of the experiences of the respondents. Sharing my own experience with the participants enabled me to have "chance to enter the

conversation and partnership with participants at the same time working with professional ethical parameters” (Tutty *et al*, 1996, p. 57). Strauss and Corbin (1990) point out that in qualitative research the three major components are the data collection, the analytic or interpretive procedures and the written and verbal reports.

Each interview began with a review of the research objectives, the ethical considerations and the interviewees’ rights. In an in-depth interview I asked open-ended questions. I was prepared to adapt or alter to help participants fully understand them. The in-depth interview helped me to compare information among the participants and also to understand each person’s experience. Lavoie (2001) states that throughout the research process, the open-ended questions in grounded theory are expanded and modified as new themes emerge from the data collection process.

3.4. Ethical Considerations

In this study, the couples benefited by having the chance to look back at the years they have been married and through this experience evaluate what has been working well. They could reminisce about the efforts that they put into the marriage to keep it going.

The risk was that they might relive some rough and unhappy times, leading to negative emotions. The interview could rekindle some unresolved crisis or issues or old controversies that have been repressed, but that did not happen. As a researcher I had no right to produce change or give advice, but I was prepared to handle that situation with great care and refer them to a workshop for married couples, counseling or appropriate services at no cost to them. I had arranged with Mount Carmel clinic about these

possibilities and they agreed they would accept such clients. However, there was no need for any referrals.

Because this study focuses on the private lives of people, the identities of the people involved and the data collected have been kept securely confidential as suggested by Punch (1994).

3.4.1. Informed Consent and Participant's Rights

Each of the participants received information about the research (appendix II), and signed a consent form (appendix III) after being fully informed of the rights of the respondents. I requested permission to use a tape recorder (appendix IV), although they could at any time request it be turned off. Six participants agreed to tape recording of the interviews. Two men refused to be taped because they did not feel comfortable with it, so I asked to take notes of their interviews. The participant's rights were discussed between the researcher and interviewee at the outset of the interview. Informed consent was separately obtained from each person to ensure confidentiality and they were assured that the data from one spouse would not be shared with the other.

The consent form stated that participation was completely voluntary, and that questions would be of a personal nature. They were free to answer any or all questions and could withdraw from the project at any time. They were told that if I had further questions, or if I wanted to clarify some issues during my analysis, I would contact them individually for a subsequent interview (appendix V). They were told that I would invite them for feedback (appendix VI) on my findings in this study if the participants were available.

3.4.2. Anonymity and Confidentiality

When tape-recorded interviews were transcribed, all identifying information was removed to prevent it from appearing in reports or other written work, including this thesis presentation. In the data analysis, each participant was assigned a pseudonym but it is not used in this thesis report. Every possible measure has been taken to ensure that they cannot be identified in the report.

All tapes, written information and computer disks have been kept in a locked cabinet in my house. I am the only one who has had access to the key. All records are to be destroyed – by shredding the paper and physically destroying electronic media – when this thesis is accepted.

3.5. Data Analysis

Hoshmand (1989) and Bogdan and Taylor (1984) indicate that in grounded theory the data analysis starts when data collection begins. It involves a constant process of categorizing, sorting, resorting, coding and recoding of data. As the researcher keeps going back to the data, new categories emerge as the perspectives change. The interrelationships between categories are analyzed until the researcher finds the core categories which relate to all categories. This is the heart of the integration process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

For this study I conducted the interviews in Vietnamese so that the respondents could express themselves more easily. I transcribed the data and organized them into themes in Vietnamese, followed by translation of the themes into English.

3.5.1. Establishing an Initial Framework

I analyzed my data by the method of Coleman and Unrau (1996). My approach was to look at the small units and identify their similarities and differences. Then I sorted, organized and fitted them together in patterns and themes. The following was my initial framework, consisting of four major steps.

1. Step One: Preparing my data in transcript form

I recorded the words spoken by each participant during the interview on tapes and made written notes when no recording was made. I also made comments in my field notes to describe non-verbal interaction, such as pausing and laughing. The field notes also included my reactions and ideas throughout the interview, as well as the relationship between the participants and myself.

I transcribed the participant's words verbatim and I indicated pauses, laughs, nervous moments and excitement. I also made notes on the context of the responses. I used standard size paper with left and right margins of two inches for making notes, codes and line numbering. Numbering each line made it easier to organize the data.

Coding helps to keep the researcher close to the data, which must be studied in order to build the analysis (Charmaz, 1990). Glaser (1978) states that line-by-line coding is the naming of each line of data. Thomas (1993) points out that the researcher may see new interpretations in familiar data. Through line-by-line coding, the researcher understands the material rather than seeing it as a descriptive exercise. For example, a short statement may address several points and it can be used in several categories.

2. Step Two: Establish a plan for data analysis

I developed rules to ensure what types of information fit together in a meaningful way and how these should be coded and then consistently applied the rules to all units of data. For example, any unit related to children I put into the category of raising children. If a comment stood alone I put it in the miscellaneous file and tried to fit it into a related category if I could. When I began categorizing my data I had questions and ideas about the data and I made notes about that as well as my personal reactions to my interview.

3. Step Three: coding the data

A. first-level coding

After I transcribed my data, I did the first-level coding. At this level I identified characteristics of the data which were evident in the text. I identified meaning units and fit them into categories which I coded. An example is given below.

To identify meaning units, I made decisions about what pieces of data fit together, and I treated meaning units as tentative and subject to change. To identify categories, I considered which meaning units fit together into categories. Categories should be logical and describe the data they represent. The categories emerged from the questions I asked or reflected critical events in the participant's stories.

The method of constant comparison guided the categorization process. It began after the meaning units had been identified. Each unit was classified as either similar or different from other units. If two meaning units possessed similar qualities I placed them in the same category and recorded that in my journal. To assign a code to a category I gave it a letter and a color which I displayed in the right margin of the transcribed text. I completed the first-level coding after I had reviewed all the categories to see how the units fit with each category and no new categories emerged as described by Coleman and

Unrau (1996). For example, the comment, “sometimes I asked the children to suggest their own punishments such as being grounded, no TV time or no computer time”, fit the category identified as raising children and I coded it R_CH in red..

B. Second -level coding

The next step was second-level coding. It was more abstract and involved interpreting what the first-level categorizes. Berg (1989) suggests that researchers need at least three independent examples to support any interpretation. I put together the meaning units that fit within each category by arranging and rearranging it. I then compared and contrasted the categories themselves in order to discover the relationships between them. At this point, I integrated the categories into themes and sub themes based on their characteristics. Once a theme was identified, I developed a code for it in the same manner as I coded categories, which was described in Figure 1.

4. Step Four: Interpreting data

I used a diagram to identify relationships that emerged between the major themes and the overall nature of the data. Miles and Huberman (1984) suggest drawing a cluster diagram which shows how themes may relate to one another by drawing and labeling circles for each theme and arranging them in relation to each other (Figure 1). The three central themes and their sub-themes are discussed in Chapter Four.

3.5.2. Issues of Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, the key issue is trustworthiness. A trustworthy study is one that is carried out fairly and ethically with findings that represent as closely as

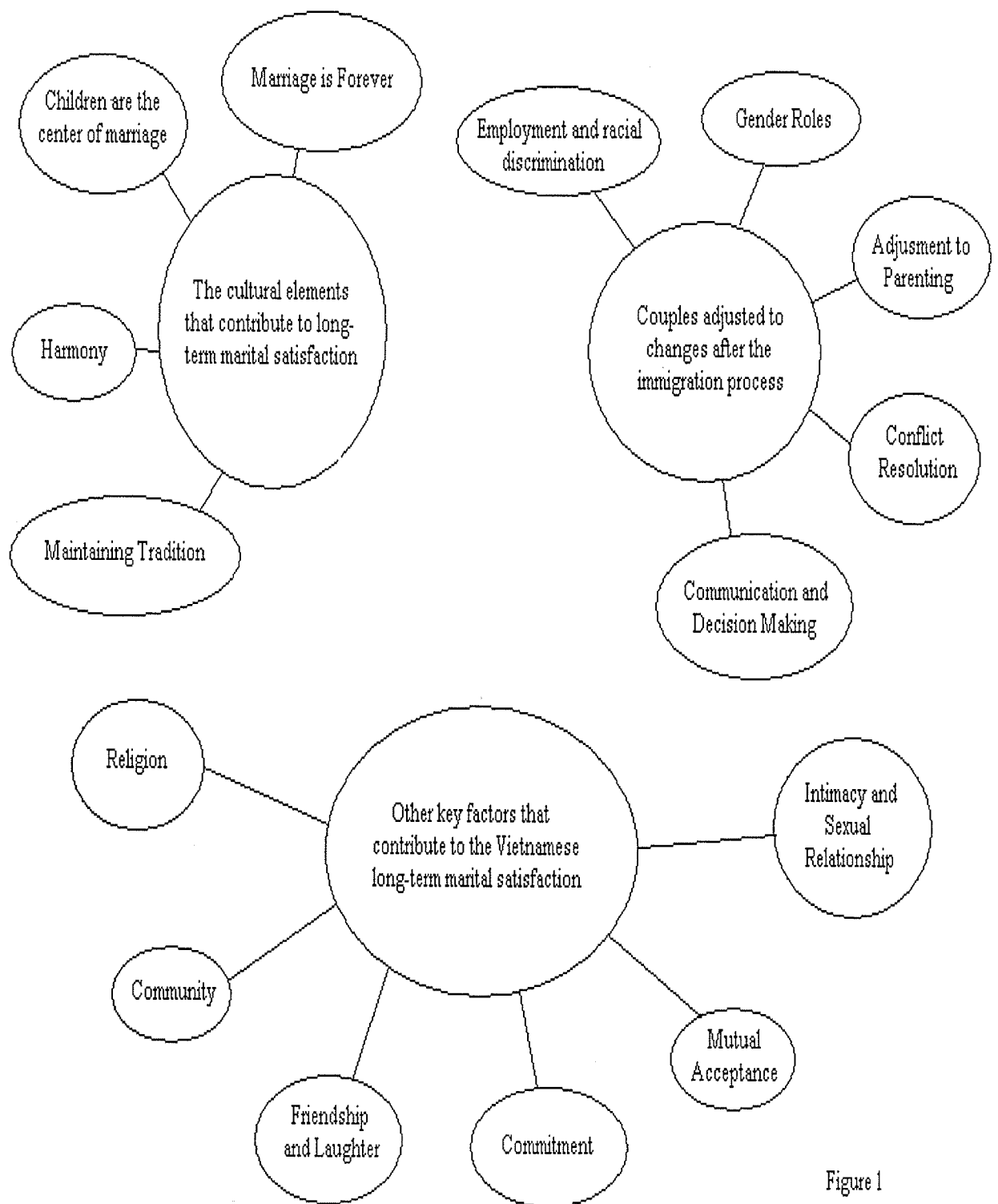


Figure 1

possible the experiences of the respondents. “Trustworthiness is not a matter of blind faith, but must be earned by rigorous scholarship” (Padgett, 1998, p. 92).

Trustworthiness in my research was obtained by thoroughly documenting the process, the content of my findings and journaling my thoughts and feelings after each interview. I made notes about any area that I wanted to explore, possible probes that I could incorporate into the next interview and the themes and sub-themes that emerged. After finishing my analysis I had some sessions to share my findings with the participants and I asked for their confirmation or disagreement. See section 3.5.4, Member Check, below.

3.5.3. Memo Writing

“Memo writing is the intermediate step between coding and the first draft of your completed analysis” (Charmaz, 2001, p.347). Glaser and Strauss (1967) state that grounded theory methods are intended to discover and define research processes. Researchers look for patterns in even a single case. They use participants’ stories to explain points by writing memos from the raw data to advance ideas from the time data is obtained. Becker (1986) points out that memo writing is an exercise in exploring ideas about proposed categories, she also describes it as free writing or prewriting.

Active memo writing from the very beginning enabled me to define how various categories were joined in an overall process, as suggested by Charmaz (2001). Memo writing helped me to look at my coding as an investigative procedure rather than as a means to sort the pieces. Verbatim material brought into my memos from different sources helped me make precise comparisons.

To help write memos, I looked for the codes that I had used repeatedly in my codes that emerged from earlier data collection (Charmaz, 2001). Memo writing consisted of taking my categories apart by breaking them into their components. I identified a category's characteristics, looked for its underlying assumptions, and showed how and when the category developed and changed. This process helped me to clarify major and minor categories. I used memo-writing to make comparisons in a process that Glaser and Strauss (1967) refer to as constant comparative method. For example, when I put together the communication category there were two codes, "saving face" and "knowing one another", that I was unsure of where they belonged. I checked with my memos and realized they should go to the conflict resolution category.

After completing the categories and themes, I confirmed them through the memos that I had written about them and I then wrote the first draft of my paper as suggested by Becker (1986), Richardson (1990) and Wolcott (1990).

3.5.4. Member check

I contacted the participants to discuss my findings with them. They suggested that both husband and wife should meet with me in the member check sessions. I met two couples in person in Winnipeg and I talked to the other two couples on the phone because they had moved out of the province. In these meetings, I presented no individual data, but the overall findings. They confirmed my interpretation of their interviews and I will discuss this in the section on feedback from participants.

3.6. Summary of the Methodology

For my research study, I used the qualitative approach. I chose this approach because I wanted to understand what marital satisfaction means to the participants and what they have done to achieve it. Qualitative research is an appropriate approach to gather information from Vietnamese couples about the factors that contribute to the satisfaction in their long-term marriage. Qualitative methods of data collection and analysis were utilized. In-person, one-on-one interviews were conducted. The participation criteria and the prepared open-ended questions are listed. I have discussed ethical consideration such as benefits and risks to participants and how to handle them. Other ethical considerations included information about the study for the potential participants, the requirement of the consent forms, confidentiality, and participants' rights. Data analysis included the approach, transcribing and coding, areas of exploration and emerging themes, and memo writing. Issues of trustworthiness, recruiting and the research limitations are discussed.

3.7. Limitations of the Study

Fontana and Frey (1994, p. 367) state that,

Because the goal of unstructured interviewing is understanding, it becomes paramount for the researcher to establish rapport. The interviewer must be able to put herself or himself in the role of the respondents and attempt to see the situation from their perspective, rather than impose the world of academia and preconceptions upon them.

From this perspective, I feel confident I have understood the participants because I have the same cultural background, speak the same language and share experiences similar to other Vietnamese immigrants. However, I have not used my own experiences as a married woman in a long-term marriage to “go native” as described by Fontana and Frey (1994, p. 367). My awareness of this trap prevented me from falling into it.

In my work experience at the Immigrant Women’s Counseling Services and in my own life experience I find that the Vietnamese men do not talk much to other women. Since I am a Vietnamese woman, I anticipated that this trait might affect the interviews to some extent. To overcome this limitation, I asked for information from the men in a manner different from how I questioned the women, e.g. I used more examples and gave them more time to respond to my questions.

CHAPTER FOUR. Findings and Discussion:

Key Factors Contributing to Vietnamese Satisfactory Long-term Marriages

In this chapter I will describe my study sample and their demographics and the factors that contributed to their long-term marriages.

4.1. Characteristics of the Sample

The participants in this study were in many ways a diverse group in age, job, number of children and their ages. They ranged in age range from 50 to 70. Two couples were 50 to 60 years old and two were 60 to 70 years old. Two couples were 15 years older than the other two. All were married in Vietnam 20 to 40 years ago and all are in their first marriage. Two of the couples had 2 children, one couple had 3 and one had 4 children. All left Vietnam between 20 and 30 years prior to the interview.

However, they also had similarities partly because I used the purposive, snow-ball sampling method. Vietnamese was their first language and all were of middle-class background in Vietnam. Seven of eight the participants were Buddhist, three couples know each other because they attended the same Temple. All four couples tended to have more advanced English language skills than others in the Vietnamese community of Manitoba suggesting that they may be better integrated into the Canadian culture than other local Vietnamese.

Two women who volunteered for this study remained in their marriage for reasons other than the satisfaction of their marriage, e.g. their children. I did not include these couples because they did not meet the participation requirements.

4.2. Demographic Data

At the outset of the interview with each person I collected demographic data. This was done independently with both spouses. That information helped me to get a better picture of the sample and build rapport with the participants. They were all from Manitoba.

Two husbands had university degrees and the other two finished high school plus other training. Two wives had university degrees and the other two finished high school. In Vietnam three of the four husbands were in the military and one was a teacher. Three of the four wives managed a small business at home and one worked in a government office. In Canada, two husbands had occupations as managers two were factory workers. Two wives were nurses and the other two were factory workers.

4.3. Areas of Exploration and the Emergence of Themes

As I interviewed the Vietnamese couples about the areas related to my research, many themes and sub themes emerged (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, McCormack-Stenmetz 1991). Each of the themes and related sub themes are listed in Table 1 and the discussion follows. Some of the husbands' comments have been edited for greater confidentiality.

In my discussion of the findings I referred to the participants as the couple or as the wife and the husband.

Table 1. Thematic Summary of findings	
Main Theme	Sub Themes
The cultural elements that contribute to long-term marital satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marriage is Forever - Children are the center of marriage - Maintaining Tradition -Harmony
Couples adjustment to changes after the immigration process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Employment and Racial discrimination -Gender Roles -Adjustment in parenting -Conflict Resolution -Communication and Decision Making
Other factors that contribute to Vietnamese long-term marital Satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Mutual Acceptance -Intimacy and Sexual Relationship -Friendship and Laughter -Commitment -Community -Religion

4.4. The Cultural Elements that Contribute to Long-Term Marital Satisfaction

In this section I will discuss the cultural elements that contribute to the marital satisfaction, how the couples view their marriage and how they have worked to maintain it. I will discuss children as the center of their marriage, how they maintain their family traditions and finally how harmony was considered a factor that contributes to marital satisfaction.

4.4.1. Marriage is Forever

Sporakowski and Hughston (1978), Roberts (1979), Weishaus and Field (1988), and Robinson and Blanton (1993) found that the sense of marital permanence was an important factor in successful long term marriages. Amato and his associates (2003) indicate that the more people believe in marital permanence the more they invest in efforts to find solutions for marital problems. My research findings confirm those of Amato: my informants believe marriage is forever. They have settled their differences so that their marriages could be satisfying and long- term.

One husband pointed out,

When I married my wife, I intended to live with her for the rest of my life. Now, after more than twenty years, with ups and downs in life we are still happy together.

One wife added,

Whatever happens, I will keep this marriage for the rest of my life and make it work nicely.

The couple respondents expected a marriage to be a combination of happiness, complications, challenges, changes and a lot of hard work. They understood the responsibilities, duties, obligations and benefits of marriage and all trusted that their spouse would have the same values.

The Vietnamese couples in this study hold strongly to a belief that divorce was never an option because the couples viewed marriage as everlasting. Rutledge (1992) indicates that divorce was not accepted by the couples who were married in Vietnam, because a divorce would destroy their immediate and extended families as well as their

children's reputation. With that belief, the couples in this study were faithful to each other and worked hard to solve conflicts to keep harmony in the family.

One wife pointed out,

My father told me I am responsible for family unit, [pause] I believe I can keep this marriage for the rest of my life as long as there is no violence in our home.

One husband commented,

Marriage is a very important aspect of my life; I have no doubt that we can keep this for good [pause] even though there is a lot of temptation where I work.

In general the Vietnamese avoid doing things that cause shame and embarrassment because they do not want to lose the respect of other people (Pfeifer, 1999). Two wives indicated that no one in their families had divorced over the last several generations. The family was the foundation of Vietnamese people's lives. Breaking up the family would have detrimental and irreversible effects for all family members (Jamieson, 1993). Keeping family together is among the highest priorities in the Vietnamese culture. Separation or divorce will cause much shame to married partners and their families. The couples believe marriage is forever, so they have tried their best to work out their differences, to sacrifice themselves for their family, to make adjustments to be faithful to their spouses, to trust their spouses, and to be role models for their children. All respondents indicated that their efforts were worthwhile because they are satisfied and content with their marriages.

One wife expressed,

From time to time my husband goes back to Vietnam for business. My friends told me that a lot of women would do anything to get a Vietnamese Canadian man so

they can come to Canada. I told them that I trust my husband and that he would never do anything to hurt my family.

A husband shared,

When my wife went back to school for a new career, my friends often said my wife will leave me for a better man, but I know my wife. She would never look at another man.

Being faithful and trusting their spouse was an important factor of their marital satisfaction. Three husbands expressed that they appreciated their wives for being faithful to them. When the communists took over South Vietnam, these three men, of the four interviewed, spent years in concentration camps for their involvement with the democracy regime. The three wives involved went through financial hardship and family problems. At the same time they had to take care of the children and visit their husbands at the camps. These wives also had to provide food and necessities for their husbands when they were in the camps. They also had to deal with the attraction of other men, who loved them, wanted to marry them and promised to provide them with a better material life. However, they refused and waited for their husbands to return.

One husband pointed out,

I know we can overcome any kind of challenge together because I am a faithful husband and my wife is very committed to our family. While I was in the concentration camp, I knew a couple of friends – who were doctors – that asked my wife to marry them. My wife turned them down and stopped being friends with them.

A second husband remarked,

I have a lot of love and respect for my wife [pause]. She sacrificed her adult life for our family. For the ten years that I was in a concentration camp, she faced many challenges by herself and overcame them. I know we will be together for the rest of our lives.

The couples realized that life in Canada is very different from life in Vietnam. To maintain satisfaction in their marriage, they were willing to adjust to the changes required and make the best of the new situation. These couples helped each other adjust to the new environment and worked together to overcome challenges in daily life as well as in larger matters. Similar to findings by Matsuoka (1979) and Rutledge (1992) I found that they put their families first and thus created and maintained satisfaction in their relationships and helped to keep their marriage intact.

One husband shared,

It was not easy to become who we are now. Both of us went through so many difficulties; we learned from each other, family and friends how to handle the new life in Canada. Now we know it's worth it.

One wife indicated,

To be satisfied in my marriage for almost thirty years is thanks to my husband. He always puts our family first. He has kept his promises that we will make our marriage work and never gave up on us.

4.4.2. Children are the Center of Marriage

Children are very important in the Vietnamese family; raising them to be the best citizens they can be is crucial to the parent's values. It was also one of the key factors

contributing to the respondent marital satisfaction. The couples in this study mentioned that they made a number of sacrifices to benefit their children. When these couples decided to have children, they both made a vow to raise them to the best of their abilities. To them, raising children included being involved in the children's activities as well as changing their own social life to have quality time with them. These couples believe that children are in need of role models rather than critics, and they guided them to be upstanding citizens and to abide by their words and actions.

One wife indicated,

There was a time that my husband had to work double shifts to support the three of us in school. Now my children go to school and work part time and join the sport program at school. They are hard-working like their father.

Another wife added,

Our children see us work hard to provide a good life for them so they follow our lead and become hard workers.

One wife said

I have to monitor my behavior because I know that my children are watching and listening. I became a better person and it helps to maintain satisfaction in our marriage.

One husband said,

I was so proud when my son said he wanted to be like me when he got older.

For the benefit of the children, the participants were willing to put up with difficulties in the workplace. Three husbands had high positions in the Vietnamese military and never had to work with their hands or take orders from anyone. In Canada, for the first time, they had to do manual work at two jobs due to family finances. All

worked hard to maintain their jobs, getting along with co-workers and advancing in their jobs.

One husband commented,

I survived all kinds of difficulties at work because of my children.

Another husband commented,

When you commit to your family you will get through any obstacle.

One husband pointed out,

We had difficult times when we first came to Canada. We faced all kinds of problems including lack of employment opportunities, but by thinking of our children we kept going

Traditionally, fathers were not included in child care. Being involved with the children's activities shows that the children are at the centre of the marriage. One wife said that when she went back to school full time while also being responsible for her family and her children's activities after school, she became sick with depression and had a hard time dealing with her daily life. She asked her husband to help out and he agreed without hesitation. He spent time with the children in their activities and encouraged them to do their homework. The wife indicated that this was a turning point in her life and also helped to maintain her marital satisfaction.

As she recounted,

He is a good man. He was willing to take over some of my responsibility with the children and continued doing them faithfully.

Her husband commented on this,

I could see my wife had so much on her plate. So I had to help out.

Three out of the four couples in the study changed their social life and took up outdoor activities with their children such as tobogganing, biking, fishing and camping. Thus, they could spend as much quality time together as possible.

Being a responsible father and husband builds a healthy family, thus contributing to marital satisfaction for these couples. One husband shared that when they were first married, he often went out with his friends and lived life like a single man. When they had their first daughter, he stayed home more often doing family activities such as reading to her, doing chores together, going out to movies, and watching television together to help family bonding. This resulted in a happier family. His wife trusts and loves him more for the improvement in his behavior.

He describes it as a positive feedback cycle

The more I act like a responsible husband, the more love and respect I get from my wife and children.

On this issue, his wife commented,

I am so glad that when we had our first daughter; my husband changed significantly [pause]. He paid us more and more attention [Yah]. He knows raising good children is one of the most important goals for us and we have to be responsible parents for our children.

Three fathers quit smoking when they became responsible for raising children. These husbands quit drinking with their friends, stopped going to the casino and learned to be good fathers for their children.

One husband noted,

For years I enjoyed smoking and going to the casino (only once in a while) [pause]. Then we had children so I had to stop smoking and stop spending time at

the casino with friends. My wife and I argued less, we saved money, and I started to feel good about myself. We changed our lives around for the better because of our children.

In the interviews all the couples pointed out that they had been through a lot of changes and have made many of adjustments to the new environment in order to achieve marital satisfaction.

4.4.3. Maintaining Tradition

Kibria (1993) found that the Vietnamese women struggled to reconcile and incorporate their new situation in the framework of Vietnamese family tradition. All the wives in this study expressed that, compared to life in Vietnam, they have more rights as human beings in Canada. However, for the most part they did not use their greater equality to reconstruct family life to a more egalitarian lifestyle because they did not want to threaten the traditional family system. As Pfeifer found (1999), these Vietnamese women valued the ethic of collectivism and cooperation that bound the Vietnamese men, women and children in the family.

One wife commented

I am a Vietnamese wife for the rest of my life. I am grateful to have rights in Canada but that won't change much in our family because I want to please my husband and that makes our marriage last long.

Another wife pointed out

...some family traditions are good, we need to practice and pass them on to our children...

A second wife added,

I want to continue managing family finance ... We need to help our relatives in Vietnam so I want to keep that part of the traditional role.

The wives made changes up to the point that they felt comfortable but stopped when they felt it threatened the family harmony.

One wife shared,

Last year I wanted to go to Germany to visit a friend by myself, as my Canadian co-workers have done, but my husband said no. He withdrew and we didn't talk for a couple of days, then I knew it was time to stop pushing it.

A second wife added,

Traditionally, as a wife, you need to save face for your husband. Just don't let your ego get in the way. I have to treat him as the head of the family.

Traditionally, Vietnamese males are obligated to support family members financially. The participating husbands sent money back home to their parents, brothers, sisters and other relatives any time their family was in need of money for such events like illness, weddings, doing business. Mace (1982), Mackey and O'Brien (1995) indicated that financial disagreement is one of the major causes for people splitting up their relationships. Sending money to support their extended family in Vietnam was common in the Vietnamese community and was a cause of conflict for many couples. However, the couples in this study expressed that they rarely argued over money. When the husbands wanted to send money to their families in Vietnam, they worked overtime or found a part time job on the weekend to earn that money. In return, their wives could spend that amount as they wished to the extent that they could afford both expenses.

One wife said,

My husband has obligations to take care of our relatives especially if they are in need. My husband has to send money to help his Vietnamese family, and I support that. So when he sends money to Vietnam, I send the same amount to my relatives.

Another wife added,

When my husband sends money to Vietnam, we use the same amount for vacation and buying household items.

Preserving family tradition also helps to achieve the couple's goals of moving into middle-class Canadian society. The participating couples expressed that in Vietnam they had lived a middle class lifestyle and their children enjoyed the resulting prosperity. They were secure in their economic and social status and their children had access to formal education. In Canada, they wanted to regain the middle class life and one of the ways was through the children's education. Kibria (1993) found a similar desire to move back into the middle class. Each of the spouses in the study worked two or three jobs for years to ensure the children had enough money for schooling. However, they also set aside time to be with their children in things like doing chores together, taking small vacations at the beach, park or camp ground.

One wife shared,

We want our children to have a good life and good opportunity here like we had lived in middle class Vietnam. So we worked very hard to provide for them.

Another wife added,

Only through education can my children move to middle class life, so we make sure they can become successful in school.

4.4.4. Harmony

All couples in my study indicated that harmony is one of the teachings of Confucianism, a philosophy which is the foundation of Vietnamese ways and thinking (Rutledge, 1992). Creating harmony in their lives was a shared endeavor of the Vietnamese couples and is a factor that contributed to their long-term marital satisfaction. One husband pointed out

I learned from my parents how to create harmony. Keeping peace in our family is a must. It was done in my family of origin so I continued it into my family. By putting the family benefit before our own, most things became easier.

One wife commented,

Harmony is very important in my marriage. We intend on keeping it, so we all work hard to preserve the harmony. For example, I learned from my mother to fight only big fights, and let go of the small ones. That way, I can handle most matters and keep harmony in my environment.

Personal compatibility is one of the elements that contribute to marital success (Winch, 1963, Lauer & Lauer, 1986). All the couples indicated that they are compatible with their spouses and that creates harmony throughout their lives together. They also want their children to live harmoniously when they leave home. They demonstrated harmony by example in how they dealt with daily life at home, at work and all other areas of their lives.

One wife remarked,

It is not only for us to keep harmony in our family, but (also) we want our children to practice it in their marriages. I often ask my children to keep calm and

think twice before saying or doing something that could create conflict at home [pause]. I learned this from my mother.

Trusting one another to spend money reasonably and purposely is another way to keep harmony.

One wife indicated,

In the thirty years we've been together, my husband never asks me about how I spend money because he trusts me to be careful of what I purchase.

A husband said,

I usually buy second hand equipment because it saves us money and the money is wisely used as well.

Child rearing requires harmony. These couples stated that often the wife was more lenient than the husband. On occasion mothers tried to protect their children from the father's punishment or anger. However, the husband understood what the wives were doing and accepted their wives as they were, so they did not let the punishments get out of hand.

One husband noted that,

Very often my wife listens to me and easily lets go of things, but when it comes to the children's issues she puts her foot down [pause]. I know if I want peace in the family I have to give in.

Another husband commented,

If there are matters related to our children, I often let my wife have her way so we can have harmony.

4.5. Couples' Adjustment to Changes after the Immigration Process

For the Vietnamese, immigration was a long, hard process of adaptation that varied from one individual to the other and depended on factors such as their economic situations, education and stress due to the family's traditional values (Matsuoka, 1979). Immigrants were uprooted from their country and replanted in a new society with different language, culture, belief, family structure, weather, legal and social systems. The process created conflicts, such as changes in employment, family values and gender roles (e.g. the husband's involvement in housework), as well as intergenerational conflicts (Kibria, 1993; Rutledge, 1992).

In this section I will discuss: employment and racial discrimination, gender roles, household division of labor and the effect of the husband being involved in household chores, adjustments in parenting, conflict resolution, communication and decision making.

4.5.1. Employment and Racial Discrimination

The participating couples stated that they faced discrimination in the work place as well as in the larger society because of their Asian look, broken English, and little knowledge of Canadian systems. Herberg (1988) mentions that immigrants are treated differently than non-immigrants in relation to their gender, race and age, and this treatment is related to how well they adjust to Canadian society. Three out of four

husbands in the study noted that for a long time they did not have a sense of belonging to Canada because they suffered racial discrimination in many areas of their lives.

Similar to Kibria's study (1993), three of the four husbands in this study indicated that immigration to Canada had resulted in huge losses for them. In Vietnam, these husbands had been in middle class occupations, giving them privileges in dealing with social institutions and government. In Canada, they lost their social and economic status. They felt a sense of alienation from Canadian social institutions and felt that Canadian people looked down on them because of their Asian look and lack of knowledge of Canadian culture.

One husband pointed out,

I don't like to deal with utility companies because they treat me as a nobody. One guy told me to go home, learn English and then come back to him.

Another husband added,

At the doctor's office or hospital, I've received different treatment. They did not talk to me or explain what was going on with my health as they did with Canadian people.

Henry and Ginzberg (1985) indicate that non-white people experience discrimination in job hunting. Three out of four husbands expressed that although there were many well paying jobs available, when they applied for many they were not hired because of their look, and their accents.

One husband commented,

The interviewers always gave me very little time and I knew someone else would get that job.

Another husband added,

I could only get a job with minimum pay even though I work harder and was more qualified than my Canadian co-workers.

The third husband commented,

I went from job to job because I could not handle the unfair treatment from my supervisors. They put me down in front of other workers because I am non-white.

Herberg (1988) states that the feelings of cultural alienation and shock can stay with immigrant people for years. Two out of four wives in the study expressed that they suffered chronic stomach problems for years because of the treatment at work.

One wife noted

What a dog- eat- dog place! I was discriminated against by the Canadian people and other people in different ethnic groups also.

Another wife added,

In the factory where I work, I am the only Vietnamese among six co-workers and the supervisor of another ethnic group. These co-workers often got ome time and I had to go home for lack of work.

Herberg (1988) notes that because immigrants have no Canadian experience, they could not get jobs that they were accustomed to doing in Vietnam. Many professional immigrants worked in garment factories or housekeeping or cleaning positions. These people experienced occupational deflection. They had experience in their countries and took courses at Red River College but were refused jobs because they did not have Canadian experience.

One man expressed,

When we first came to Canada, I was very frustrated about finding a job. The employers always asked me for my Canadian experience, but they never gave me

a job. How could we get experience if we couldn't get a job? Without jobs, men become nothing. So I took any job that I could to support my family.

Another man added,

They did not recognize my degree from Vietnam; they advised me to go back to university if I wanted to become a professional. As a husband and father, I have to provide for my family so I took any job that was available and I ended up at a garment factory.

One wife noted

I was a teacher in Vietnam. In Canada I went to the University of Manitoba and got a teaching degree, but I could not get a job as a teacher.

The participants felt that the most important things in their lives were their families and nurturing good children a goal for which they willingly sacrificed themselves. When they immigrated to Canada, three husbands worked two jobs for the first fifteen years, two wives worked two jobs for several years until they had serious health problems, and the other two wives went to school and worked part time while taking care of the family.

One husband said,

I have great respect for my wife. When we first came to Canada with four small children, we left our personal possessions in Vietnam. Along with that, we lost our fame, money, and our comfortable life. In Canada, people recommended that we get welfare. Both of us discussed that and decided to stay on our own two feet. In order to do that, my wife had to work two jobs and take care of the children while I was working overtime. For the first couple of years, I hardly saw her sleep or

rest. Then she got sick, close to death, so that I stopped her and now she works only one job.

When they arrived in Canada, many immigrants did not speak English and had a hard time finding as good a job as they had in Vietnam. Very often, they did manual labor and received low pay for their efforts.

As one husband commented,

I was in a position of authority in Vietnam. I gave orders to people, but in Canada I worked in a shipping department and took orders from everyone there. That was the most difficult period of my life, but I have a family to take care o., I have to work...

In the interview the couples pointed out that they worked hard for the benefit of their families and now they are pleased with the results of their efforts as well as their marriage.

4.5.2. Gender Roles

In Vietnam gender roles are very clear and fixed. Men have their roles and women have theirs in the family.

4.5.2.1. Woman's Role

For years, the Vietnamese wives were trained that their role was to keep the family united by giving in to their husbands, so that giving in became second nature to them. This ability helped their marriage last long (Kaslow & Hammerschmidt, 1992).

Immigrating to Canada changed the women's roles substantially. For the Vietnamese couples that I studied, it was the women who were the caretakers, taking care of family members physically, mentally, and spiritually, doing most of the housework and also working outside of the house. The wives were also the liaison between the family and the outside systems, including school and health care as was also found by Gordon (1990). These wives felt they had to be on top of everything all the time. After they arrived in Canada they prepared themselves to experience the new environment, its laws, its new values and its beliefs. They were willing and open to learning new things, building kinship with friends in the community.

The wives in this study also learned and put into practice the lifestyle that they learned from Canadian friends, such as two way communication between husbands and wives, and between parents and children. They slowly involved their husbands in household chores. They decided on what family traditions to keep and what needed to change in order for their family to integrate smoothly into the new environment. The wives mentioned that they did not discuss changing their lifestyle with their husbands but they created and took advantage of opportunities for change.

The wives pointed out that at first there was frustration and disappointment because of the slow changes on their husbands' part. However, the couples were willing to practice harmony, mutual acceptance and to sacrifice themselves for the family so they could finally overcome all the challenges.

4.5.2.2. Husband's Role

In Vietnam, most of the couples in the study lived a middle-class lifestyle in which the husbands worked outside the home and were the providers, while the wives took care of family members and worked inside the house. That was also found by Grasmuck & Pessar, (1991). The husbands in the study stated that in Vietnam they had power over their wives and children because they had power in the social and economic institutions of South Vietnam. Their wives remained subservient to them and their children depended on the father's economic and social resources for their success in life.

After immigration everything changed. The husbands were no longer the primary bread-winner in the households and the authority of fathers over the children was reduced by their loss of economic resources. The hierarchical Confucian way of life in which women were subordinate to men was being altered by the conditions of life in Canada. Deutsch (1987) points out that due to the job opportunities that women and their adult children experienced in Canada, there is a growing freedom from the patriarchal tradition. The women in the study commented that they and their children got jobs much more easily than their husband and that encouraged them to have more say in what happens to their life and family.

One husband commented:

In Vietnam I made the money, my wife and children depended on me. I was the head of the family. In Canada, we all have to work for family needs. They can earn money and not depend on me. They look at me differently and do not respect me as before.

A man whose wife worked outside the home and contributed to the family finances was asked or was assumed to be responsible for some household chores

(Ishisaka, 1997). Many Vietnamese men slowly adjusted to these changed expectations and family tasks such as grocery shopping, cooking, cleaning and taking the children to activities after school came to be done by the parent who was available (Rutledge, 1992).

4.5.2.3. Household Division of Labor

All couples said that the household division of labor changed after immigration. Before that, the traditional Vietnamese household was often composed of multiple generations with the household chores being shared among wives and girls (Kibria, 1993).

One wife indicated,

When we first got married, I did all the housework as I was trained to do by my mother. At the same time I helped him out with his family business. Just like my mother.

Another wife added,

In Vietnam my husband never did anything in the house because that was a woman's job. I got help from other women in the family to do household chores. My husband dealt with things outside of the home [pause]. That was his responsibility.

During the long war that the Vietnamese experienced, many women worked, did the housework and made decisions by themselves (Gold, 1992). After migrating to Canada, many Vietnamese wives continued to work outside the home for the family's financial stability (Caplan, *et al*, 1989; Finnan & Cooperstein, 1983; Gold, 1992). When both husband and wife work outside the home it is important to share the household labor

(Kluwer, Heesink & Van de Vliet, 1997). Bader (1900) indicates that the household chores are the most heated issues between spouses. However, the participating couples expressed that if they wanted to build their marriage in a satisfactory manner they would have to adjust so that family life could be as smooth as possible.

One husband indicated,

When a woman goes to work to make money, a man needs to help out with the housework. I think that is fair.

Another husband pointed out,

Involvement in household chores is crucial for our long-lasting marriage. It improved our relationship and made it stronger.

The participating husbands felt that because they were physically stronger, they could get more work done so their wives could have a break. Most husbands pointed out that sharing household chores with their wives was a must in building a lasting, healthy relationship. The couples interviewed indicated that the changes were necessary for the maintenance of marital satisfaction.

A husband commented,

While my wife prepares dinner, I clean up the house. After we are done eating, we clean up together.

Another husband added,

If you say you care, then prove it [pause]. I show it by doing laundry...

Although these wives expected their husbands to help out with the housework, they still considered it as primarily their responsibility. The findings are similar to those found by Rutledge (1992).

One wife pointed out,

Even though I changed a lot, I am still a Vietnamese woman, who is responsible for every chore in the house. I am grateful for every small help from my husband's help, even a little.

Another wife added,

I still have to redo some of my husband's chores because his ways are not that good [pause], but he was not trained for it [smile]. So I just don't complain.

Another wife commented,

The household chores that we do depend on each individual's strengths and abilities. I am happy if my husband only does the vacuuming.

One wife who came from a traditional family was solely responsible for all the housework. It was shameful for her if her husband helped out with small chores. She did all the cooking, cleaning, shopping, and driving children to their activities, and on top of that she worked full-time in a factory where most of the workers were Vietnamese and Chinese women.

She recounted

I was trained by my original family that the wife takes care of family members. In the factory where I worked, most of my female co-workers managed the same responsibilities. We complained about that but kept on doing the same thing day after day.

When she changed her job and started to work with Canadian women and learned a new way of life, she gradually changed her thinking about housework. She encouraged her husband to participate with the housework. At the same time, her husband recognized that other husbands were doing work in the house too. He learned to cook simple dishes and set up the dinner when he came home before his wife. She reinforced

the change of attitude in her husband by often thanking him, because she realized that was the best way to encourage him to do more.

As she put it,

He deserves a lot of thanks for his thoughtfulness [yeah] and also for his courage because some of his friends teased him for being 'girly'.

Her husband expressed his thoughts on this,

A couple of years after my wife changed her job, she said that our son needed to learn how to clean and do other chores in the house. She said that we need to train our boys when they are young by being role models for them on this matter.

I agreed, so I learned to cook and clean while my wife learned to let go of the "woman of the house" mentality. It was not easy at first but we kept on practicing [smile]. Now it is normal to us.

At the time of the interview, the husbands did those household chores more compatible with their skills and schedules.

4.5.2.4. The Effects of the Husband being Involved in Household Chores

My findings agree with researchers who found that when husbands share and participate in house-hold chores, their marriages are happier (Hochschild, 1989; Young, 1995). The wives in the study said they felt loved and appreciated when their husbands helped with the housework, even if it was with a few chores. As a result of this behavior, these wives were happier, showed more respect and gratefulness to their husbands, and it helped to maintain their marital satisfaction.

My experience working with Vietnamese couples who have troubles in their marriage is that husbands who do household chores are emotionally healthier than husbands who do not do household chores. This is similar to Gottman (1991 & 1994). The husbands in this study also were proud to note that they adapted well to the new environment. Besides working outside the home for the family income, they worked side by side inside the house with their wives. They indicated they felt “whole”, inside and out.

Through involvement with housework, they understood the hard work that their wives had to do and appreciated them more. Those feelings helped to build up their long-term marital satisfaction as was also found by Gilford (1986). Most wives believed they were lucky to have husbands that shared the housework with them.

One wife commented,

My husband goes with the flow and that is the best part of our relationship. He helps with the dishes and I have more time to do other things...

All the wives indicated that their relationship got better because their husbands became involved with the housework. They felt appreciated, cared for, and loved.

One wife recounted,

The first time my husband did the dishes was on my son's birthday. I did not expect that [hmmm] and I felt so special.

On this occasion, her husband shared,

My wife looked very tired and she was eight- months pregnant with my second boy. I felt a need to help out, so I did the dishes.

One husband pointed out that because the women had a hard time managing both the housework and the work outside the home, the husbands should help with the housework.

He added,

Usually when a wife works too much, she gets upset easily and we may end up arguing or fighting [hmm]. I want to have harmony in the home, so I help with cooking and setting the table.

All wives said they were fortunate because most of their co-workers were unhappy to shoulder all the housework alone.

The wives indicated that they understood the traditional role of the male and did not expect very much help from their husbands. Therefore, they felt lucky and loved by their husbands for involving themselves in household chores. The wives expressed their appreciation to their husbands when they felt that the husbands had worked hard. They also appreciated that the men respected their opinion.

One wife noted,

Sometimes I want to shout out that I am the luckiest woman because my husband helps with the household chores and listen to my opinions.

Another wife added,

He did the household chores and took care of my son so I could concentrate on my school and I graduated with very high marks. That I will never forget.

The couples agreed that sharing the household chores is one of the ingredients that makes their marriages lasting and satisfying.

4.5.3. Adjustment in Parenting

The participating couples pointed out that their children were the most important people in their relationships. Vietnamese culture places emphasis on achieving one's identity through close relationships with the immediate and extended family. However, the social disruption and separation of many Vietnamese families as a result of war and subsequent migration caused the loss of significant family members and related traditions (Matsuoka, 1979).

The adjustment to new values, new social systems and a new physical environment had a different impact on the Vietnamese immigrants, dependent on their age. Matsuoko (1979) points out that because adults have well-defined identities, they have greater difficulty adjusting than young people. The younger Vietnamese individuals had spent less time in Vietnam learning the culture and the values there, so it was easier for them to forget what little they knew and to adapt to the new ways of life in Canada.

Many Vietnamese were traditionally trained that being silent was better than talking too much, and Vietnamese communication was often of a high context communication (Herberg, 1988). They often worked around the issues instead of resolving them directly and saying what they actually meant, because they did not want to cause others to feel uncomfortable. The Vietnamese desired to bring harmony to their relations with others and responded to others in a way that would bring peace. Traditionally, when a Vietnamese elder or authority figure talked, the youngster or subordinate listened and did not ask questions or talk back because their opinions did not mean anything to the elders (Herberg, 1988).

The Vietnamese youth learned that Canadian society encourages people to speak openly and say exactly what they mean, and that conversation is a two way exchange of messages to which people listen when discussing each other's ideas. Hence, many Vietnamese youths in Canada do not take orders as they would have in Vietnam (Rutledge, 1992).

Furthermore, Vietnamese youth observed how informally Canadian youth treated their elders, and they assumed this was the normal attitude and behaviour in Canada. That created conflicts of moral values in the family (Montero, 1979; Rutledge, 1992; Yee, 1979). Rutledge (1992) points out that for many Vietnamese youth, filial piety of Confucianism which provides the rationale for children to support the family financially, was influenced by the Canadian individualism with the result that Vietnamese youth refused to hand over their wages to their mothers.

When the Vietnamese couples in this study migrated to Canada, they faced all kinds of challenges, not the least of which was raising children in a new culture. The way they raised children in Vietnam often did not work in Canada and they felt frustrated and confused. They felt that their values and beliefs were threatened. Most of the couples tried to protect their values from being lost. They indicated that conflicts between them and their children arose because the children were influenced by the greater freedom that Canadian children have. Their children felt torn between two cultures and challenged their parents' values and beliefs. These couples realized that their family was experiencing change due to the new environment. They had to learn and to adjust their ways of living – what could be taken from Canadian culture and blended with their values – so they could effectively raise their children in Canada.

One wife pointed out,

We moved to a new country like Canada where so many things are different from how they were in Vietnam. We need to learn what values to keep and what to change, so we can live and raise our children effectively.

Another husband commented,

It is impossible to apply the old Vietnamese way to raise our children here. At first we tried and it did not work. So we learned and adjusted our way of discipline, communication and things got better at home. Our children turned out good and we are happy.

The couples stated that, at first, they raised their children according to their traditional ways in which the father gave orders that were not open to discussion. Over time, they had to adjust their ways of raising children to keep harmony in their home.

One husband commented,

To live here we have had to adjust so much especially in dealing with children. It has been difficult, but we want to have a satisfactory family so we have to work on it [pause]. It was worth it...

One husband remarked,

To raise children here, where they have so many rights that they don't know what to do with, is difficult. We need to be ahead of the game. We spend time with our children and discuss things, especially about their friends, with them. For example, who they can be with and what kind of family their friends come from.

4.5.3.1. Wife as a Communication Filter

Through the interviews, I recognized that the wives adjusted to the new environments more quickly than the men. They learned new things through attending group meetings in the community and by talking with other women who had the same experiences. They applied the new knowledge in daily life and became the communication center of their families.

The Vietnamese couples shared that they came from a culture where the parents could use physical force to discipline their children. However, that is not the case in Canada. These wives learned new laws and shared that information with their husbands so that their families would not have trouble with people in authority.

When the participating couples first came to Canada, three out of four husbands practiced the tradition of ordering wives and children around. That created a lot of resentment between fathers and children. These wives often were the ones who tried to smooth conflict in the families. They indicated that in time their husbands and children learned to understand the different situation and to adjust their behavior to keep the peace in the home. That helped to maintain their marital satisfaction.

One wife shared,

When we first came to Canada, my husband often ordered us around, as if we were in Vietnam. I was a “communication filter” between my husband and our children. [pause] I explained to my children about Vietnamese tradition... I talked with my husband about the child abuse law in Canada and troubles between parents and children in my community. My husband changed substantially. Now my husband and my children talk and listen to each other [smile]. I am not a “filter” anymore.

Another wife added,

I always encourage my husband to talk to my children so they know what he expects of them. The children are in Canada now; they are not as passive as we were in Vietnam. They request explanations for everything [pause]. We need to talk.

Vietnamese parents changed their behavior by giving fewer orders and more explanations of their motivations. They listened to their children's opinions and became less rigid in their expectations of their children's behavior.

One husband commented,

Life is full of challenges, especially raising children in Canada. We have to face challenges and deal with them in a constructive manner.

Another husband added,

Raising children in Canada is different than in Vietnam. [Yah] we need to talk, listen and discuss with them to find workable solutions. We can't be bossy with them or we will lose them.

4.5.3.2. Changing Ways of Discipline

The old way of discipline, these couples said, was that when the children were small and would do something wrong, the fathers would give them an intimidating look to try and scare them into obedience or give punishments. The mothers just talked and sometimes screamed at the children. On occasion, the mothers took the children's side and argued against their husbands. In those situations, their children became confused and did not know right from wrong and the parents would get frustrated and angry.

One wife shared,

I was like my mother. When my children were young sometimes my husband got upset with them about something and I covered for them; I wanted to protect my children from my husband's harsh treatment [pause]. I know that was not always good, I tried to work on it...it's getting better...

Three out of four wives pointed out that after being in Canada for a number of years, they learned parenting skills through parenting groups and through a group of friends in the temple. They took the new information home, discussed it with their husbands, and came up with appropriate ways to deal with their children's problems. The parents would first discuss the problems between them and then explain to the children what the consequences of their actions would be. This improved the situation because the children understood clearly why they had been in trouble. They had to think about the solutions and how to correct their behavior.

One wife noted,

Sometimes I asked the children to suggest their own punishment, such as being grounded, no TV time or computer time.

The couples in the study expressed that traditionally Vietnamese parents would tell their children what kind of profession they would pursue. For example, boys would study engineering, medicine and law, while the girls would learn to be teachers or nurses. In Canada, they learned to discuss with their children what profession they wanted to follow and to what university they wanted to go. The children were much more receptive to this new practice than the old traditional ways.

One wife remarked,

It makes sense that everyone should be able to choose their profession, not the fathers. We discussed our children's future with them and we supported their choices and never regretted it. The children were happy about that as well. We were all satisfied with it.

Another wife said,

When my son wanted to study at the University of Toronto, he arranged everything by himself and then he told us. Both of us were surprised and worried. At the same time, I was proud of his determination and maturity [smile], just like my husband. We supported him and after he graduated, he worked in a respected company.

4.5.4. Conflict Resolution

The literature supports the importance of a couple's ability to manage conflicts on the basis of respect and tolerance (Weishaus and Field, 1988), compromise (Whitbourne and Ebmeyer, 1990) and communication (Robinson and Blanton, 1993). Having the same values and beliefs helps the couples they understand each other on issues when there is disagreement.

One husband indicated,

Saving face for a husband is a must to us. My wife knows it well. She has never put me down in front of people. When she is upset, she won't talk to me and she won't eat dinner. Then I have to recall what I have or have not done. If I ask her, she will talk to me and we will talk about the problem and try to deal with it. Knowing your spouse's temperament is a key for problem-solving.

All the couples interviewed indicated that they hardly fight now compared to when they first got married. Throughout their years together, they have learned through trial and error to manage their conflicts. They developed conflict resolution strategies that fit their personalities.

One wife shared,

When we first got married, we fought a lot [pause]. If there was a disagreement, I would talk a lot. My husband responded by turning into a piece of ice. Then we had a cold war. Later on, I learned from his mother that he only pays attention when people talk to him in a calm manner. So when I get angry about something, I go to a park and cry my eyes out. Then I go home and write him notes about how I see the problems and also my solutions [pause]. It works like magic. He will tell me what he does want and if he is quiet I know he is all right with my opinions.

4.5.4.1. Knowing one another Helps to Manage Couple Conflict

Gottman (1993, 1994) suggests that couples have to manage their differences in ways that strengthen their relationships. Some husbands realized that disagreements were opportunities to learn more about their spouse.

One husband indicated,

After we discuss a difference and come to an agreement, we let it go.

They valued their spouse's ability to listen, forgive, forget, and accept. They all indicated that those were the keys to conflict resolution strategies.

One husband commented,

We know what works for us and we use it to our advantage. For example, when my wife is in tears, I know it is time to back off, and I either stop talking or walk away.

Another man added,

When my wife starts to raise her voice, I just leave the room. I know that it is the only way to avoid a fight.

All of the couples agreed that managing conflicts was important in a marriage, as found by Cheung (2005). A common opinion on conflict resolution was that they could avoid many fights by accepting differences rather than challenging them.

One husband found it easier just to go down to the basement when his wife was upset so she could reflect on the past events. After a period of time, he found that she would always be the one to smooth things out so the conflict could be resolved.

On this matter the wife stated,

I am always the one yelling and screaming, but then I think about it and calm down afterwards [laugh]. He knows me well, he just let me do "my thing" and then I will make peace again.

Two husbands indicated that when there was a conflict, they and their wives would each go their own way and think about it. These couples practiced the old Vietnamese saying: "Don't put gas into the fire".

One husband pointed out,

We need time to cool off. I would rather be quiet than argue for everything.

Another husband added,

I cannot talk about my feelings as my wife does. So when the discussion heats up, I just leave the room.

One wife expressed,

My husband and I are like the sun and the moon. There are some issues that we can discuss and there are some issues that we cannot. There is no use for fighting.

One husband commented,

I know my wife well. I would not discuss any issues about her original family [pause]. I leave her to deal with them in her own way.

His wife added on this subject,

My husband has a lot of power in our family, but he has no control over issues that relate to my original family. I reminded him of that from time to time when we first got married [pause]. He knew I meant it, so he listened.

For managing couple conflict, the participants learned and practiced their own ways which worked for them. They set the boundaries to avoid further conflict.

4.5.4.2. Women Fight for Children Issues

Most wives believe that their husbands are the head of the family, but that does not prevent them from participating in problem solving and having arguments with their husbands around children's issues. These wives actively participated in family discussions. They expressed their ideas and fought for the benefit of their children. This finding agrees with research by Cheung (1999).

One wife commented,

I love my children the most and I am very close to them; I often listen to their dreams and hopes. There were times that I stood up for my children, no matter what. My son wanted to attend private school and I knew that we could afford it,

but my husband wanted to use that money for business. We fought hard and finally he gave in.

Her husband pointed out on this topic,

My wife has never wanted anything for herself, but for the children she hardly ever gives up. Sometimes it was getting too much, but so far her ways turned out to be the best way. My children turned out to be successful adults.

When making decisions, the wives pointed out that if they cooperated with their husbands they found that they received the same cooperation from them.

One wife commented,

When making decisions I only put my foot down for things related to my children. I let him have his way other times.

4.5.4.3. Husband feels Win-Win Situation, Wife Gives in

The wives had the ability to look at a disagreement from an outside perspective, but maintained harmony by giving in. For the most part, the husband evaluated the situation as a “win-win situation”.

One wife said,

It is fine if I have to give in once in a while. That's for the sake of our relationship.

Three out of four wives suggested that their husbands were hot tempered and tough, so that they needed to be soft and fluid. They had to find the right time to discuss issues and when to give in for the sake of the family. This was also found by Rutledge (1992).

One wife shared,

I know when he is upset; I just walk away and let him calm down. I wanted the children to learn how to deal with conflicts in a non violent way such as this.

One wife pointed out that she believed that the more they agreed on things, the more peace they had in the family. She was concerned about their children's health and education so she insisted on deciding what school the children should attend and what kind of sports they should join. For the rest, she went along with her husband's decisions.

One wife pointed out,

We have been close friends since our childhood; we know each other's strengths and weaknesses and also the buttons that will make us jump. We both come from families that value harmony and loving kindness so it is easy for us to share our lives together with satisfaction. Once in a while we fight and usually we make it up fast [pause]. My husband gets his way first, before he listens to me.

Sometimes, they debated an issue many times before coming to a reasonable decision. For instance, one family decided to buy a car. The wife believed that they had the finances to buy a new car, while her husband thought that they should get a used one. He insisted on buying an old Toyota, and, in time, the wife acquiesced.

One wife pointed out,

I want peace in the house, so when I feel the heat coming, I step back to let him have the glory.

One couple practiced traditional family values with the wife yielding to the arguments most of the time. For instance, she wanted to send her oldest daughter to

Vietnam for a summer vacation and, twice, she fought for that, but finally gave up because it was not worth the trouble.

The wife recounted,

I talked with my husband about sending my daughter back home to see our relatives and also to learn about our roots. It's time for her to do that [pause]. My husband was worried that she would not handle it well by herself [pause]. He kept saying "NO" [pause]. When he decided, no one could change his mind.

She added,

Besides, that was exactly what happened in my original family. We listened to my father and everything was fine. I put up with a lot of the things just like my mother.

While the husband commented,

As husband and father, my responsibility is to make decisions [pause]. My wife and children can give opinions too and I will listen if they are reasonable.

4.5.4.4. The Wife initiates Communication and Adjusts to the Husbands'

Temperament

Often the wives initiated the communication after a cold war. They believed that was their role to keep the family in harmony and united.

One wife said,

I can't stand the silence for long. Life is too short.

Another wife mentioned,

We can talk things out, why be quiet? [pause] That is my role as a peace keeper.

A third wife explained,

If I don't start to talk, we may not talk for weeks. Most of the time, when you calm down, the argument becomes irrelevant.

Managing couple-conflict is a must for maintaining marital satisfaction. The participating couples developed ways to deal with conflicts, from minor issues to important issues. Since their children have grown up, the couples ask their adult children to help resolve conflicts, which I will discuss next.

4.5.4.5. Adult Children as Consultants in Managing Marital Conflict

The participating couples pointed out that, traditionally, unsolvable marital conflict would only be solved by the intervention of the original families but these are not available in Canada. They do not accept help from the government or outsiders for family problems. In the absence of their original families, the participating couples now share problems with their adult children and ask for their opinion on how to solve them, as was also found by Cheung (1999). The couples believed that sharing their difficulties with adult children benefited the whole family. They get their problems solved and the children had an opportunity to learn different ways to manage couple conflict. That is also one of the ways to keep the family intact.

One husband indicated,

We never asked outsiders about our marital conflicts. For years, we dealt with it through talking with our original family. Now in Canada we only have our adult children to talk to.

One wife indicated,

My children are adult now. I believe they can learn couples' negotiation and compromise through us. I started to share with them some of the problems between me and my husband. We discuss it. Then I talk with my husband, and sometimes we talk as a family. My husband agrees that we should share our problems among family members.

Another wife commented,

My daughters and I are very close. One is married and the other has a boyfriend. Sometimes I shared with them the struggles of my husband and me. They often see the whole picture better than me, and they are willing to talk with my husband about that. It works well [pause]. My husband listens to them too. So in the end, we came to an agreement much easier.

One husband expressed,

My children have good hearts. Now they live and work in different provinces, but they are still involved with us. Occasionally, I tell them about an issue between me and my wife. They listen and sometimes give us good opinions.

All couples in this study pointed out that by sharing marital conflicts with their adult children they created more ways to negotiate and compromise with their spouse. It also helped them to communicate openly and to be able to see different aspects of the problems. These couples indicated that after discussing issues with their adult children, they often arrived at workable solutions for both spouses.

4.5.5. Communication and Decision Making

All participants expressed that in the beginning of their marriages they all struggled with decision making. They carried the value of harmony from their original family, and made adjustments in their lives so that their marriage went smoothly. This was also found by Matsuoka, (1979). All couples shared that traditionally the husband was the decision maker of the family and the wife was submissive to her husband. They were trained that way when they were young, and they carried that tradition into their adult life.

The husband of one couple shared that he was trained to be the breadwinner, provider, and decision maker, so he automatically assumed that role in the marriage. He made most of the decisions including major purchases and child-related matters, and his wife agreed that was the husband's role. The wife came from a family in which the husband made most decisions so she accepted that as his role.

The husband remarked,

As the man in the family I assume the role of head of the family [Uhhh]. I decide most of things that happen in the family after I consult with my wife, and I believe she is fine with that. [Uhm]. I think we are O.K.

The wife agreed on this issue, as she stated,

My husband is a fair man, I trust him to make decisions for this family because he has proven himself through the years.

She indicated that her husband was a thoughtful man. He sometimes asked for her opinions on family matters and tried to compromise when her opinions were different.

She pointed out,

I trust him and his guidance [uhumm]. With a man like that, nothing will go wrong.

She continued to share,

Back home, my father was the decision-maker [yeah]. We just went along.

However, now in Canada my husband talks with me and consults me on different issues and that makes me feel respected and important.

4.5.5.1. Wife Learned from Canadian Friend to Participate in Decision Making

Canadian society places less social restrictions on women than Vietnamese society does (Matsuoka, 1979). As Vietnamese women learned Canadian values while sharing wage-earning responsibility with their husbands, they requested more voice in family affairs and had more influence on the family decisions. Some wives challenged their husbands' patriarchal status creating a change in family dynamics. The husbands agreed that part of the more equal relationship was learned from Canadian friends and Canadian society at large.

One husband said,

We live in Canada; We have to learn a lot of things from Canadians in order to keep our relationship working. When I was young, I could feel my mother's frustration when she had to obey my father all the time. I would not do that to my wife. Besides, I don't want to take all the blame if things don't go as expected.

One wife expressed,

I saw a lot of unfairness back home, where the man was the king in his family. Everyone had to listen to him even though he was a lousy father and husband. I

would not accept a leader like that. So when I got married I fought for my right and in Canada I have support in this battle.

4.5.5.2. Making Decisions in Areas of Responsibility

Roberts (1979), Robinson and Blanton (1993), Greeff (2000), Greeff and Matherbe (2001) all suggest that open communication is an important factor in long-term marital satisfaction. Most couples in this study confided in one another because they believed that would help build a healthy and lasting relationship.

One husband commented,

We plan to stay together for the rest of our lives so we must solve our differences by open communication with one another...

Most wives indicated that in order to have marital satisfaction, the couples needed to talk, listen, and discuss everything from everyday life to important issues. Because they have lived in Canada for many years they have learned that a husband does not just give orders but should also listen to his wife and children. Therefore, the wives learned to give opinions and they requested that they be heard by their husbands.

Each of the spouses has different abilities, strengths, and talents to contribute to make good decisions for the benefit of the whole family. Having lived together for many years, they know themselves and their spouses well enough to know what they can and can not do. However, for the most part, husbands and wives made decisions in their areas of responsibility.

One wife commented,

I often decide small things in the house. There is no need to discuss them with him. I know what he likes and dislikes. He decides about electronic things which I don't know any thing about. It is O.K for both of us.

Burgess, Wallin and Schultz (1953) and Roberts (1979) place emphasis on “give and take” and on cooperation in decision-making between spouses. Gottman (1994) points out that reconciling the differences between couples increases the ability to love. The couples indicated that, compared to their parents, they shared the decision making more equally. As husband and wife they were teammates in life, working together and sharing responsibilities and benefits equally.

One husband made the following comments regarding decision-making:

Together we can build a mountain. My father was the head of the family but my mother made most of the decisions. I believe we carry out a decision better when we have input in that decision [Yah]. That is why we need to discuss our decisions together. [Hum]. Sometimes I give in and other times my wife gives in provided we discussed the issues together.

The participating couples practice harmony in decision-making. They worked together to develop ways to make decisions as a couple. In the interview they indicated that they were satisfied with their decision-making patterns as well as their marriages.

One husband remarked,

Now that we are in Canada, we have to share the power of decision making with our wives if we want a long-lasting and satisfying marriage.

4.6. Other Factors that Contribute to Vietnamese Long-Term Marital Satisfaction

Mutual acceptance, intimacy and sexual relationship, friendship and laughter, religion, commitment and community are other factors that contribute to the Vietnamese couples' long-term marital satisfaction.

4.6.1. Mutual Acceptance

Mutual acceptance was one of the key factors that contributes to satisfaction in long lasting marriage, as found in the literature (see Chapter Two). All couples indicated that by accepting one another, their relationship got stronger throughout the years. Some husbands said that if they wanted to be respected for who they were, they needed to accept their wives in the same way.

As one husband said,

I want to be who I am and that applies to my wife too.

Another husband added,

We are two individuals who have different wants and needs. So when I accept who my wife is, she is happier and therefore so am I. It goes both ways. That keeps our relationship strong and healthy.

All couples pointed out that their years together have taught them acceptance of each other, which includes compromise, flexibility and adaptability. Some wives shared that from the beginning of their marriage, they opened their hearts and shared their emotions and frustrations with their husbands but were upset when the sharing was not

reciprocated. One wife expressed that she had sensed that something was bothering her husband, but even after asking him many times, he responded only with silence. Later on, the wives learned that if their husbands didn't want to talk about a problem, they just had to accept it and move on with their lives.

One wife remarked,

Life is easier when we are flexible in our marriage [pause]. Knowing when to get my way and when to let my husband have his way is crucial for our relationship.

Another wife added,

There is an old Vietnamese saying that when we are single, we open both eyes. When we are married, we close one eye so we can maintain our long-lasting marriage [pause]. I find that when I compromise with my husband I feel more satisfied with our marriage.

The wives also voiced opinions similar to those of the husbands, that if they wanted their marriage to be satisfying and lasting, they needed to accept their husbands the way they were and work around their differences to cope with their lives. Sometimes, they had to put up with things they did not want, but they also realized that their husband had to do the same.

One wife stated,

I go along with his idea of buying a new car. It puts a lot of pressure on our finances, but the new car is his passion, and that was who he is.

A second wife stated,

Now patience is my husbands' strong point. He waits for me to get ready when we leave the house. I take quite a long time to dress. Before, he often got upset but now he knows and he just waits.

She continued by sharing her meaning of acceptance,

I appreciated his acceptance and learned from it. [Yah] I accepted his fishing hobby in the summer time. He was never home on the weekends and that is okay with me now.

One wife recalled that, when they were first married, her husband often postponed fixing broken things in the house until the problem became big and costly to repair. The wife talked with him about that, but he has never seen things the way she saw them. She finally gave up the idea of changing him. Things became easier around the house and their relationship became more harmonious.

All couples expressed that mutual acceptance is a learned behavior that helps couples build and sustain long-term satisfaction in their marriage. They shared that they had to struggle to accept their spouses as they were, but they concluded that “It’s worth the effort”.

Next, I will discuss intimacy and sexual relationship as factors of the couple’s marital satisfaction.

4.6.2. Intimacy and Sexual Relationship

Intimacy is a positive aspect of strong, healthy, and satisfying couple relationships (Harper & Elliot, 1988; Robinson & Blanton, 1993; Gottman, 1994). For the couples in this study, intimacy for some was the family spending time together on camping trips, sitting by the fire telling stories, barbequing, or playing tennis with other families. Others in the study described it as couples getting together with some friends for dinner, followed by karaoke in their basement, or sitting hand in hand watching television.

One husband shared,

We are close to one another, especially when it is only the two of us at home. I have time to pay attention to my wife more. She has back problems so I massage her every night so she can have a good sleep. In return, my wife gives me a kiss on the cheek and says "I love you" in the morning when she leaves for work.

A wife commented,

Now all of my children are gone, my husband often gives me a hug when I do the dishes. I feel his love without him saying anything.

One wife stated,

We create satisfaction in our marriage. For example, I ask my husband out to movies, dinners and camping for the two of us. I think he gets the idea, because this year he planned our valentine dinner with champagne and candle lights.

Some couples indicated that the sexual relationship was not an important factor in their marriage. Affection, trust, closeness, good communication and mutual respect were more important. This finding agrees with the literature discussed in Chapter two. Most of the couples indicated that private matters should stay in the bedroom and they commented that Canadian society promotes too much freedom of sex.

One husband recounted,

When my children were at home, we never showed any couple affection in front of them, as we never expected to see that kind of behavior in our parents [pause]. In Canada my children can learn sexuality in school [pause]. How awful.

As one husband said,

In Canada, sexual behavior was everywhere we turned; I just don't know how to stop my children from seeing that. That is not appropriate.

Most of the wives believed that sex was a part of a marriage relationship. Two wives accommodated their husband's sexual needs because they felt that that was their duty as a wife. This was also found by Cheung (1999). These two wives pointed out that they had needs different from their husbands' but neither could discuss these needs with her husband.

One wife shared,

I never say no to my husband even when I am tired and don't want to be bothered. My mother told me that I have to please my husband and that was what I have been doing.

A second wife added,

I always wait for my husband to make the first move. As a wife, I am not supposed to go for it first, but sometimes I want to.

The situation was the same for some of the other husbands. They admitted that they just guessed at their wives' sexual needs and wants and they tried to fulfill them, but the subject was never discussed openly.

One husband pointed out,

Once in a while I ask my wife what she thinks about our sex life. She says nothing, so I just leave it. I assume she is OK with it.

Sexual intimacy was difficult to discuss with the participants. They believed it is important for their relationships, but felt that it was a private matter and felt quite uncomfortable with the topic.

4.6.3. Friendship and Laughter

The following is about friendship and laughter which are crucial for the participant's marital satisfaction. Friendship between the spouses is an important factor of marital satisfaction as cited by Lauer and Lauer (1986), Robinson and Blanton (1993). All couples in the study indicate that they liked each other's company, support and attention, and they made the effort to enjoy time together. The wives shared that through the years together, their husbands became their best friend. Most of the husbands shared the same positive opinions about having their wife as a friend.

One wife shared,

I feel lucky that I can talk with my husband as a friend. He understands me like one of my best friends in Vietnam.

A second wife added,

Sometimes I need a shoulder to cry on and my husband gives me just that. I appreciate him for his friendship and I tell him that, too.

One husband shared,

I am glad that my wife knows me better now. She stops putting pressure on me to talk about things that I don't want to talk about [pause]. She's more like a friend than a wife.

The couples agreed that having their spouse as a friend helped them achieve marital satisfaction. Keeping this friendship as a part of their relationship may include couples being involved in the same activities.

Spending free time with each other and with friends is a requirement in a marital relationship and this gives the marriage quality (Greeff, 2000; Greeff & Marlherbe 2001).

Fun time and laughter help to enrich the couples' memories of family life. The participating couples shared memories of good times at the beaches and on camping trips.

One husband said,

One of the positive things about my wife is she has a funny bone. She laughs so easily and makes others laugh too. When our family goes to the beach, she develops games and tells jokes. I always laugh at her jokes.

One wife shared,

We always have a good time during our camping trips. At night, by the fire, we tell jokes and ghost stories. My family shares so much love and laughter together.

The participants acknowledged the importance of laughing together. Being able to see humor in difficult situations lightened up their lives and permitted them to laugh at their own mistakes on occasion. Sometimes, laughter helped to ease the marital conflicts.

A husband said,

It is hard to get upset when my wife laughs at her mistakes; she turns the mistake into a lesson to be learned.

All the people interviewed agreed that friendship and laughter are required in a couple's relationship. They create good times for themselves, with their children, and friends and that helps maintain their marital satisfaction.

Commitment is another factor that influences marital satisfaction and I will discuss it next.

4.6.4. Commitment

The couples indicated that one of the main aspects of family is committing themselves to the family. This commitment was maintained through love and respect. There is an old saying “Without respect, love cannot go far”. Burgess *et al* (1953), Roberts (1979), Goedecke (1982), Gottman (1994) found that love is one of the basic elements of a marriage. The couples believed that the love and respect of their spouses helped them through life’s ups and downs from the time that the first child was born, through the children’s teenage years, to the time when the children moved out.

One husband pointed out,

I was trained to believe that if I committed to my family, I would raise successful children. I think the belief helps to create the facts. Now I am satisfied with my marriage and also with my children’s success. I am glad that my commitment brought good results.

A wife commented,

We have been through so many challenges, and we are here today because of our commitment to each other and to our children. I know my husband is committed to our family and knowing that keeps me going, one foot in front of the other [pause]. Together we just walk.

4.6.5. Community

The Vietnamese community which was created after the migration to Canada will be discussed in this section. Belonging to a community that serves the Vietnamese as well as society at large is important to the participating couples.

The participating couples proudly expressed their effort to maintain and cultivate their Vietnamese ethnic identity through involvement within the community. This pride was also found by Nagel and Olzak (1982) and See and Wilson (1988). Rutledge (1992) points out that the Vietnamese who came to Canada brought their culture with them. Their ways of thinking and behaving are who they are. They expressed their identity through their community's cultural organizations which were developed and maintained as tools necessary for the preservation of the Vietnamese cultural identity (Pfeifer, 1990). The community is a network whose members share a common language, cultural traditions, and similar immigration experiences (Rutledge, 1992). Kibria (1993) points out that most people join community organizations at the invitation of family or friends. Members shared rides with friends or family to attend meetings. Once they started attending these meetings, they often became involved in a social network with other members.

One wife commented,

We have so many groups in the community. For example, "sport group", "party group", "fishing group", and the "karaoke group". So when people attend some of the events in the community, they join in the group that they like. Friends bring friends and the groups grow bigger. We joined in one of these groups and this makes my life more satisfying.

Three of the participating couples volunteered to make community events happen by helping organize weekend and summer Vietnamese classes for youngsters as a part of their regular activities. They indicated that these connections and family activities contributed to the couples' long-term marital satisfaction, as also found by Stinnett (1979).

The participants expressed that Canada provided them with opportunities that helped them create a good life for themselves, and they were willing to contribute to the larger society to make it stronger and safer as a whole. Some become involved with the temple, churches, volunteering at daycares, nursing homes, and community cultural centers.

One husband shared,

We are happy and satisfied with our lives because we have a connection with our people in the community. We share with friends the ups and downs as well as work and play. My wife often thinks of others and wants to help people. That is why we are so deeply connected.

Activities help the preservation and the development of the Vietnamese cultural tradition in Canada (Rutledge, 1992). For instance, the Free Vietnamese Association drew hundreds of Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese to its New Years Celebration. That organization holds displays of Vietnamese clothing for different occasions, food, and other ethnic specialties, as well as Vietnamese folk dances. Another function of community is to offer aid through the cultural organizations to support newcomers to Canadian society.

One wife noted,

We volunteered at the Vietnamese Association soon after we arrived in Winnipeg and continue to do so now. We've helped to prepare for different events. I liked to connect and rebuild our friendship that was lost by the migration.

Through the social networks, the wives exchanged food and material goods, as well as money for crises or emergencies. They shared child care, cooking, and information about social services, hospital, school and job-hunting. The wives expanded their responsibility to include the household chores, paid work outside the home, and access to social services.

These couples complemented the Vietnamese organizations such as the cultural center by helping Vietnamese newcomers adapt to their new situation and by helping them find jobs and training opportunities. Min (1988), Morawska (1985), Portes and Bach (1985) also found individuals helping out in that same manner.

4.6.6. Religion

Rutledge (1985) notes that in the Vietnamese community, religion serves to reinforce the ethnic cohesion and identity of its members. Dorais *et al.* (1987) points out that religion provides its adherents living in Canadian society with a means to maintain their identity, values and cultural habits. Vietnamese religious institutions served as agencies of integration into Canadian society, while at the same time, they provided the means to preserve the Vietnamese culture and traditions (Pfeifer, 1990). Religious institutions also played the role of extended family and friends, and significant interpersonal relationships and mutual assistance developed among members. The members provided advice to one another regarding personal as well as family matters.

They helped each other with moving, home renovations and auto repairs. Furthermore, the members invited each other to family events such as marriages, birthdays, various celebrations, and funerals.

For example, three of the four participating Vietnamese couples go to the Temple every Sunday. When they were at the Temple, they practiced meaningful rituals together and discussed Buddhist teachings with a group of friends. Shared religious beliefs enhanced the couples' social support network and also strengthened the family

Sporakowski and Hughston (1978), Lauer and Lauer (1986), MacKinnon *et al.* (1984), Call and Heaton (1997), Roberts (1979), Robinson and Blanton (1993).

One wife shared,

Being with my husband and friends in the Temple is always good for my spirit. We learn and share with each other about Buddhism and how it helps our lives.

One husband commented,

I look forward to Sunday, as now that I am retired I like to spend time with my friends. After the service at the Temple, my wife and I, and a couple of friends go out and have a good time.

4.6.7. Feedback from Participants

As promised at the outset of the study, I presented the participating couples with my findings and asked for their feedback. The following statements were their comments:

1. The key factors (harmony, mutual acceptance intimacy and sexual relationship, friendship and laughter, commitment, community and religion) were what they expected.

2. Two wives expressed that until they answered the questions in my interview, they had not realized that they had been through so much as a couple after immigrating to Canada. They made enormous efforts to make their marriage work in a satisfactory way. Answering the interview questions gave them a chance to look back to see what they have accomplished and they were proud of themselves and their children.
3. Other two wives shared that after the interview they grew more appreciative towards their successful adult children. For their children, all the couples put their heads and hearts together to work on their primary goal of raising responsible children, and at the same time, they experienced satisfaction with their marriage.
4. Three husbands expressed that they are now more involved with the Vietnamese community because they have more free time. They hoped that their children would learn from them to be involved with building and strengthening the Vietnamese community.
5. The most traditional couple in my study indicated that the interview encouraged a change in their couple relationship. The husband pays more attention to his wife, and the wife has become more involved in decision making.

4.7. Summary

The participating couples experienced long-term marital satisfaction because they achieved the most important goal of raising good children. Most of the adult children of the interviewed couples were educated, successful professionals, and thus they had raised a good family. Harmony, based on Confucianism, has had great impact on how the

couples worked out conflicts. Each spouse made changes and adjustments over time to create and maintain the strength of their marriage.

They rebuilt their social networks and supports within their community in Canada. Through these connections they provided help and support to each other including material help, and also emotional and spiritual support.

All factors that have been discussed are important, but the following three factors were rated as central by all the couples in this study: gender roles, raising children and maintaining family traditions.

4.7.1. Gender Roles

Caplan *et al* (1989) found that Vietnamese families adapted quite well to new systems in new countries. They practiced gender role equality in decision making, and they participated in the labor force, children's school activities, and domestic chores. Johnson (1989) found that Vietnamese husbands and wives shared child-related matters, financial and social activities, as well as house repairs. Other tasks such as house-cleaning, laundry, and gardening were often done by children and extended family.

One wife expressed,

After living in Canada for many years, we have learned and changed so many of our roles as husband and wife.

Traditional Vietnamese wives were in charge of the household duties and child care (Muzny, 1989; Rutledge, 1992). In Canada, household duties have become more equitably distributed between husband and wife as Vietnamese wives joined the work force and contributed to the family income. The division of responsibilities and labor at

home was usually based on compromises between all members of the family and everyone had to adjust to the changes (Ishisaka, 1997).

In the new Canadian environment, with wives working outside the home or going back to school, the roles of both husband and wife needed to accommodate the changes in lifestyle.

One husband pointed out,

What is a man's job in Canada [pause] other than watching television and drinking beer? [pause] My wife works as hard as I do all day long, so what kind of man would I be if I didn't help out with the chores?

One wife commented

My husband goes for groceries sometimes when we need more food and he cooks supper when I work overtime.

Another wife noted

...my husband drops off and picks up my son at swimming practice. He took over that task when I started school

The husband's role as decision-maker also altered after the couple moved to Canada. The participating husbands expressed that not only had they lost their social and economic status but they also lost their power of decision-making in the home. They had to listen to their wives' and children's ideas so that at times they compromised or acquiesced. They indicated that at first it was very difficult to accept their loss of status, but for their children's sake they learned to adapt to the changes. They felt that adaptation was getting easier over time. During the interview, all the men felt they had made peace within themselves and enjoyed their relationship with their wives and children.

A woman's role is that of caretaker and that includes raising good children and taking care of her husband. Kaslow *et al* (1994) point out that traditionally, women want their husbands to have power and social status. However, the wives in my study looked for husbands who had the ability to raise successful children and be good role models for the children. The wives shared that now that they had achieved their most precious goal of raising successful children, they felt fulfilled in their role as parent and spouse. Cheung, (1999) also found that sense of achievement in her respondents who were Hong Kong Chinese and European Canadian couples.

4.7.2. Raising Children

Raising children in Canada was the largest challenge for the participating couples. They expressed their concerns about the freedom of children in Canada. The influence of peer pressure, the media, and social systems on their children caused the parents difficulties in raising their children, compared to how they would have raised them in Vietnam (Paddock & Ingram, 1991).

The couples in my study felt that the Canadian culture of the individual was opposite to the Vietnamese family tradition of the collective way (Kibria, 1993). Both husbands and wives worried that their children would learn the new Canadian ways and refuse to practice the Vietnamese way of living. Now they understand how much their families have been influenced by the new environment. The wives shared that they often learned from other wives how to raise children – what to do and what not to do – through their involvement with the temple and the Vietnamese community as volunteers and as participants in a parenting group. The wives brought ideas home to discuss with their

husbands about parenting the children effectively without confusing them because they were living in two different cultures.

The couples indicated that they wanted their children to values cooperation and nurturing. It was also found by Ginsburg, (1989).

At the time of the interviews, the participants expressed that they had made changes in parenting styles to fit with their new environment so they could have healthy relationships with their children. They were satisfied with their efforts because all their children were good Canadian citizens and that result contributed to their marital satisfaction.

4.7.3. Maintaining Family Traditions

The wives in this study indicated that there is ongoing adjustment within their family traditions. Since they moved to Canada, there has been a continual process of change in the parent/children and husband/wife relationships. These changes provided good opportunity for women and children to raise their concerns and to question hierarchal family traditions. Although the children viewed Vietnamese tradition as outdated and wanted to have the greater autonomy of Canadian life, they do not totally reject family traditions. The wives indicated that they and their adult children strive to adjust their tradition to the new environment, to work with it, and enhance their own power without completely destroying the traditional family rules.

The wives in this study indicated that they liked to keep the Vietnamese tradition that gives the wife authority over their children and obligates the males to provide

economically for their family. This creates households in which family members support their own. It was also found by Stacey (1990).

One wife pointed out,

We need to pool resources together for family use. If family member or relative needs money, we can help them.

All the couples in the study believed that the old family tradition – father is the head of the family, family members take care of one another and adult children take care of elderly parents – worked well for them in the past. It helped them to overcome obstacles when Canadian society rejected and discriminated against them because of their gender, race, and age. This was also found by Kibria (1993).

One husband noted,

For our family, it has been this way for years. We need to be responsible financially for our family. Especially in Canada, where we don't have a big family.

There are common qualities that the couples are proud of and want to keep to pass on to the next generation such as the close, cooperative, and selfless relationship between family members. It was also found by Ginsburg, (1989). Therefore they tried their best to talk about and practice these qualities in daily living and through storytelling.

One wife expressed,

To live successfully in Canada, we have to know what traditions to keep, what to adjust, and what to get rid of...

A second wife commented,

There are a lot of good things to pass on our children and grandchildren, like the closeness, caring for, and being responsible for family members.

All husbands and wives in this study expressed that their lives together had been close, respectful, trusting and loving. This was also found by Schwartz (1994), and Blaisure and Allen (1995). The wives pointed out that the time was now for them to harvest life and to enjoy it together as a couple. There is an old saying, "There are two things in life that people aim for. The first is to get what they want and the second is to enjoy it". These wives spent time and energy planning weekend events such as karaoke, camping, socializing with friends and visiting children in other provinces.

Through interviewing participating couples, I realized that the wives accepted changes easily, were eager to learn new things, and adjusted well to their new environment. They often motivated and encouraged husbands and children to learn and to change for the family's benefit. Often, they took no credit for what they had done, but, instead credited their husbands and children. The husbands indicated that for the benefit of their children they were willing to make all kinds of changes such as involving themselves in household chores, spending time with the children, and sharing the decision making with the wives. All the wives acknowledged the changes their husbands made and they were thankful for the husband's willingness to adjust to new values; especially, they appreciated the more equal treatment they received.

CHAPTER FIVE. Contributions and Implication

5.1. Contributions to the Literature on Marital Satisfaction

Most of the literature on western marital satisfaction concentrates on the satisfaction of the individual (Lauer & Lauer, 1986; Willi, 1992; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995) rather than that of the family unit. Dien (1992) points out that some Western theories do not apply to non-European cultures. Social workers who work with non-European families and couples need to learn and understand how cultures and beliefs shape individuals and how adjustments to new ways of life influence the meaning of marital satisfaction in immigrant populations.

My findings indicate some differences and some similarities. The differences are that to the participants the family unit is their first concern. They sacrificed themselves for the benefit of the family, with the goal of raising successful children as the criterion of their long-term marital satisfaction. Community is another factor which they created after having emigrated to Canada. The connections and activities within community also contributed to their marital satisfaction.

I found that the participants value harmony, mutual acceptance, intimacy, and the sexual relationship, friendship and laughter, religion and commitment. These aspects are similar to the findings of Rutledge (1992), Lauer and Lauer (1986), Robinson and Blanton (1993), Gottman (1994), Call and Heaton (1997), Roberts (1979), Greeff (2000) and Greeff and Marlherbe, (2001). I also found that keeping marriage forever is a must to the participating couples. This agrees with Weishaus and Field (1988) as well as Amato and his associates (2003). The above suggests that for a long-term satisfying marriages

both husband and wife must work together from the beginning of their marriage. All individuals who were interviewed believed that they and their spouses intended to keep their marriage forever. This forced them to work out their differences and adjust to changes in their marriage relationship.

5.2. Implications for Practice

Social work clinical practice based on Western literature often does not apply to non-Western cultures (Cheung, 1999). My findings can provide clinical practitioners with insights into non-Western family relationships in the area of family and couple counseling. This study calls for family and marriage counselors to adopt a more culturally diverse approach because it shows a different meaning of marital satisfaction. My findings indicated that marriages were solidly built around the family and the most important goal for these couples was raising successful children. Similar to Cheung (1999), I found that when parents with difficulties shared conflicts with their adult children it was beneficial for both generations

The participating couples worked very hard and persisted in the achievement of the goal of long-term satisfaction in their marriage. From the experiences of these couples, clinical practitioners can develop culturally appropriate intervention when working with Vietnamese clients.

I suggest that social workers who work with Vietnamese couples pay close attention to how the Vietnamese are affected by Canadian social values and systems. These systems provide the opportunities and limitations by which the Vietnamese construct their family life. The Vietnamese respond to these systems according to the

culture they bring with them to Canada (Kibria, 1993). Furthermore, as a social worker who works with immigrant families, I have seen that we are more successful when we work with our clients' values and beliefs, provided they remain within Canadian law.

There are power issues between immigrant women and men that is shaped by their unequal access to and control over economic and social resources in Canada (Blumberg, 1991). My study indicates that when they arrived in Canada the participants experienced a shift in gender balance of resources. The wives had greater influence in their family as a result of greater control over resources compared to what they would have had in Vietnam while the husbands had a profound sense of loss in their social and economic status in comparison to the past (as discussed in Chapter four). My work suggests that the social workers who work with Vietnamese couples study the strengths and weaknesses of this issue to develop services aimed at making the economic and social resources more equally available to both genders. For example, more English classes, an easier accreditation process, more job training, more government workers learning and practicing culturally diverse approaches in dealing with immigrant populations so that they can integrate more successfully into Canadian society.

5.2.1. Direct Implication for Women in Abusive Relationships

I came from Vietnam more than 20 years ago and have lived in Winnipeg all those years. In the last thirteen years I have worked as a social worker with victims of wife abuse. In my daily work at the Immigrant Women's Counseling Services I have seen immigrant families in trouble in many aspects of their lives including couple conflict, family violence, lack of parenting and communication skills, separation and

divorce. I wanted to know how other immigrant families who can manage their lives through life's ups and downs while keeping their families intact and remain satisfied with their family relationships.

This study has direct application to my work with women at the Immigrant Women's Counseling Services and is aimed very much at the women of the immigrant community rather than at both men and women. Interventions such as proposed here are culturally appropriate.

Most of my clients come from countries where wife abuse is accepted as normal. They were trained from a very young age that the husband has the right to control them as well as their children and that it is his right to keep family traditions, including the abusive treatment of women. When these women moved to Canada, they experienced significant isolation from the Canadian community and from the Vietnamese community in Manitoba. The combination of cultural and language barriers as well as the immigration process created an environment for my clients that trapped them in abusive relationships. They must earn an income for economic reasons while also maintaining their domestic role. Lacking social supports and being without the connections of the traditional extended family makes their work a lot more difficult. These factors caused many of them to challenge their husbands' patriarchal status and that usually created marital conflicts.

The migration process was a difficult, painful process to most of my immigrant and refugee clients. Each individual adapted to the new environment differently as they faced the various problems of their age, gender and family situation.

The client's children often challenge parental authority and some become hostile. The conflicts are exacerbated when parents tried to practice, in Canada, the social and cultural values of Vietnam while their children were exposed to and eager to adopt Canadian cultural values. More than anything else peer pressure pushes children to do things so that they fit in with a social or school group. The family living environment greatly influences their children to an extent and in a manner depending on age and gender.

The clients' husbands also experienced the loss of family tradition as well as economic and social status. They had to deal with the demands of a new country where they often felt threatened, inadequate and surrounded by uncertainty. The home would be the place where these men felt safe to release their frustrations, fear, anger and other stresses, often on their women. They often remained hesitant to share household chores and child care with their wives and felt threatened when they experienced the role changes that inevitably took place. The wives, who were subservient back home, become assertive in Canada because they learned new values and saw new opportunities in which they were supported by Canadian society.

In these situations my clients experienced all kind of abuse, physical, mental, financial and sexual. Their husbands often controlled their activities, discouraging them from attending English as second language classes, seeing friends or family and going to work.

These men insulted and belittled their wives by calling them names. Some, but not all, also had bad tempers that flared up over every little thing that my clients did. The children who witnessed the daily abuse copied the behaviour from their fathers and

became abusive towards their mothers and other women. My clients lived chaotic lives even though they wanted to live in a harmonious home, raise respectful children, manage family conflicts without violence and keep their families intact as was their tradition.

I believe the findings of this study will address some of the needs and wants of these clients. Therefore, I will develop a group manual on couple relationships to work with them. I expect this manual will also be of use to other social workers who work with immigrant and refugee families as well as other families that are having problems.

The purposes of this Group Manual will be to;

1. Help clients to understand that they have rights, and to encourage them to stand up for those rights, that are protected in Canada because this country takes a zero tolerance approach to family violence.
2. Encourage clients to utilize available resources.
3. Provide communication skills that enable clients to listen and talk with their children, spouses and each other.
4. Encourage clients to ask for help and to help to one another through volunteering and attending community events to build a support network with others.
5. To encourage clients to practice give and take and ask for help with household chores

The group manual will be organized around six sessions that will include:

1. Family and children as the top priority
2. Gender roles
3. Adjusting their parenting practices to the Canadian reality

4. Conflict resolution between spouses and parents and children
5. Communication and decision making
6. Mutual acceptance, intimacy, friendship and community.

In the first session, we will discuss how to use harmony as a foundation of family interaction and of raising children. We will discuss commitment as one of the main aspects in maintaining the family and helping the couple go through life's ups and downs. To raise children to be the best they can be the parents need to become involved with their children's school, homework and after school activities. They need to be role models to their children.

In the second session we will discuss gender roles. Group members will learn to ask their husbands to help with housework as well as child care if the wives work outside the home. She needs to acknowledge her husband's effort and encourage that by showing appreciation whenever he does any house work.

In session three we will discuss adjustments in parenting and changing methods of disciplining the children. Parents and children need to support each other. All are struggling with cultural and other life issues during the traumatic transition in a new country and culture. We will discuss open communication between parents and between parents and children so that they may all understand each other and so that parents can properly guide their children. They need to promote self-confidence and determination in their children. The parents need to define rules, boundaries, expectations, goals, roles, and responsibilities appropriate to their children's gender and ages. Finally parents must connect themselves and their children with community resources that will meet the needs of all, recreation, tutoring, employment search and training and counseling among others.

In session four, the group members will discuss conflict resolution. They will learn to develop strategies that fit their personalities so that they can deal with issues, from minor to major ones that arise in their lives. For example, by walking away when they feel an unmanageable conflict may start and coming back to talk about the issue when both husband and wife are ready to deal with it. Adult children can also be involved as consultants in marital conflicts when they are willing to be involved.

In session five the group will discuss communication and decision making. For example, the parent can learn to make decisions in areas of their responsibility, they can discuss important issues such as those related to their children when they arise. The parents must know they can depend on each other's abilities, strengths and talents to contribute to decision making for the benefit of the whole family.

In the last session, group members will discuss mutual acceptance. They will discuss and learn to respect and accept each other as they are. They need to learn and practice compromise and flexibility. They will discuss intimacy as a part of couple's life. For example they can spend time together on camping trips, barbequing or watching television hand in hand. They also will discuss and learn that friendship with their spouse is crucial for their marriage. They can make an effort to enjoy time together or with friends. They will learn that being involved with community brings support and help with auto and house repairs, childcare and finding jobs among other things. Through involvement with community they can also maintain and cultivate their ethnic identity and traditions

5.3. Suggestions for Further Research

This is a study of first-generation immigrants. It is important to study second generation and other Vietnamese immigrant couples to examine their definition of long-term marital satisfaction, and to see how that definition changes with second and subsequent generations.

A further study of couples who live in other parts of Canada would be useful in order to examine regional Canadian influences.

5.4. Summary

In this study I gathered information from the participating Vietnamese couples about why they stay in their long-term marriages and how they adjusted to a new country in order to experience satisfaction in their marriages. I found similarities and differences in the factors that contribute to long-term marital satisfaction in comparison to the literatures that studied non-western and western people. I believe my findings can help the service providers to develop culturally diverse approaches to serve the immigrant communities better.

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Appendices

Appendix I. Letter of Invitation to Service Agencies for Recruitment of Samples

Research Project Title: Vietnamese Couples' Perceptions on the Factors that Contribute to Satisfaction in Long-Term Marriage

Graduate Student Researcher: Dung Le

Research Supervisor: Dr. Maria Cheung

Dear President / Coordinator

Re: Recruitment of respondents for a Master of Social Work thesis research project on "Vietnamese Couples Perceptions on the Factors that Contribute to Satisfaction in Long-Term Marriage."

I would like to ask for your help in recruiting five Vietnamese couples for my study of the factors contributing to satisfaction in long-term marriage. This research is a partial fulfillment for my master of Social Work degree at the University of Manitoba.

My sample criteria are:

1. Husband and wife can be from North, Central, or South Vietnam.
2. They must be in their first marriage and have children.
3. The couple must be married for at least 20 years at the time of the interview.

4. The couples must have been living in Manitoba, Canada for at least 5 years at the time of the interview.
5. The couple must be ethnic Vietnamese and they may, but need not, have a formal education.
6. The couples to identify themselves as being in a satisfying marriage.
7. The couple is either an immigrant or refugee.
8. The couple must be in a non-clinical population.

The informed consent will be separately obtained from each spouse and the data from each spouse will be kept confidential in relation to the other spouse.

I will do the in-depth interviews with each individual of the couple. The questionnaire and interview will be in Vietnamese and the latter will take about an hour and a half. The interview process may be from July 1 to July 31, 2005.

All couples' participation is voluntary. Confidentiality is guaranteed. An informed consent form (see attached) will be signed by the participants individually. I will ensure that the participants' identities and the data collected are kept securely confidential. All information, including location that could lead to any form of identification will not be published.

All participants will be told that I will interview them, transcribe and translate the interview into English. All the participants will be told that tapes, written information and computer disks will be kept in a locked cabinet at my house and will be destroyed when the study is complete. I am the only person who has a key and access to the data.

This study is to enhance our knowledge of how Vietnamese couples in long-term marriages have created their marital satisfaction. Your help will facilitate conducting the study.

To better inform you about this study, I look forward to discussing my proposal with you in further detail. Please contact me at (204) 477-5191 if you have any questions. I am enclosing release of information forms for couples that you identify as being willing to participate in my study.

Yours Truly,

Dung Le

MSW Candidate

90 Captains Way

Wpg. MB R3X 2J1

Appendix II. Information Letter of the Study

Research Project Title: Vietnamese Couples' Perceptions on the Factors that Contribute to Satisfaction in Long-Term Marriage

Graduate Student Researcher: Dung Le

Research Supervisor: Dr. Maria Cheung

I am a graduate student of social work at the University of Manitoba. I am requesting your participation in my study on the factors that contribute to marital satisfaction in the Vietnamese community. That is a partial fulfillment for my Master of Social Work degree. The purpose is to understand how Vietnamese couples remain satisfied in their long-term marriages despite the challenges that they have had to face daily throughout their married lives. I look for couples who meet the selection criteria as follows:

1. Husband and wife can be from North, Central, or South Vietnam.
2. They must be in their first marriage and have children.
3. The couple must be married for at least 20 years at the time of the interview.
4. The couples must have been living in Manitoba, Canada for at least 5 years at the time of the interview.
5. The couple must be ethnic Vietnamese and they may, but need not, have a formal education.
6. The couples identify themselves as being in a satisfying marriage.
7. The couple may be immigrant or refugee.

8. The couple must be in a non-clinical population.

I would like to invite you to participate in an in-depth interview if you meet the mentioned criteria. I will interview each of you individually, face- to- face for approximately one and half-hours. If I have further questions during my analysis of this study, I will contact you for further interviews.

Your participation is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at anytime. The interview will be in Vietnamese and it will be tape-recorded. During an interview, you can turn off the tape recorder at anytime. You have the right not to answer any questions. The tapes of the interview and their transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet at my house and will be destroyed when I complete my study.

The informed consent will be separately obtained from each of you and the data from each of you will be kept confidential in relation to your husband/wife.

If you agree with the process please call me at (204) 477-5191 to arrange a face-to-face meeting at your convenience. The interview location will either be at your house or a place that is convenient for you. I will bring consent forms for you to sign.

In anticipation, I thank you for your consideration.

Yours Truly,

Dung Le

Appendix III. Thesis Research Consent Form

Research Project Title: Vietnamese Couples' Perceptions on the Factors that Contribute to Satisfaction in Long-Term Marriage

Graduate Student Researcher: Dung Le

Research Supervisor: Dr. Maria Cheung

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and be sure you understand any accompanying information.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study, which focuses on the satisfaction you have experienced in your marriage.

The purposes of the study are:

- To explore the factors that create satisfaction for Vietnamese couples in their long-term marriage.
- To identify ways to help couples who have difficulty in their marriages but want to stay and work on them.
- To give social workers and other practitioners some culturally appropriate knowledge to help them work with the Vietnamese population.

- To help social service delivery systems develop more effective programs and services on family relations to the Vietnamese population.

The informed consent will be separately obtained from each of you and the data from each of you will be kept confidential in relation to your husband/wife.

The interview is approximately one and a half hours. In the interview I will ask you to share with me anything that you think may be relevant to this study. If I have further questions during my analysis, I will contact you for further interviews. The consent form for further interviews is attached.

During an interview I believe we will discuss both pain and joy. If you have some discomfort after the interview. Please contact the counseling resources (attached) that are available to you at no cost.

Your participation is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at anytime. The interview will be in Vietnamese and it will be tape-recorded. During an interview, you can turn off the tape recorder at anytime. You have the right not to answer any questions.

I will transcribe the tape-recorded interview. To ensure you are not directly identified, every possible measure will be taken. All identifying information will be taken out of the transcriptions, identified reports or other written work, including my thesis presentation. Each of you will be assigned a number or pseudonym.

The thesis committee members - Maria Cheung, Esther Blum and Carol Harvey - will have access to the data only after the identifying information has been removed. Tapes, written information and computer disks will be kept in a locked cabinet at my house. I will be the only one who has access to the key. They will be destroyed – by

shredding the paper and erasing and physically destroying electronic media – when the thesis is accepted. The interview location will be either at your house or a place that is convenient to you.

After the interview, I will invite you individually for feedback on my findings in this study. The consent form is attached. A summary of research findings will be made available to you approximately two months from the time of the last interview. Please indicate in the space below if you would like to have a summary of the findings.

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba. Although I am working as a counselor at Immigrant Women's Counseling Services, I ensure that my position will not influence any involvement you may have at that agency, and it will not affect any service you may be receiving now or may receive in the future.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a respondent. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so please feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Dung Le (researcher)

Telephone number: (204) 477 5191

Maria Cheung, Ph.D. (advisor)

Telephone number: (204) 474-6670

The Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board has approved this research. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at (204) 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Signature of participant _____ Date _____

Signature of researcher _____ Date _____

I would like to request a summary of the research findings (please check one)

☐ email

☐ fax

☐ mail

Appendix IV. Consent to Audiotape

Research Project Title: Vietnamese Couples' Perceptions on the Factors that Contribute to Satisfaction in Long-Term Marriage

Graduate Student Researcher: Dung Le

Research Supervisor: Dr. Maria Cheung

Consent to Audiotape

I give permission for my interview to be audio taped. I understand that I can turn the tape recorder off at any time during the interview.

Signature participant _____ Date _____

Appendix V. Thesis Research Consent Form For Further Contact

**Research Project Title: Vietnamese Couples' Perceptions on
the Factors that Contribute to Satisfaction in Long-Term
Marriage**

Graduate Student Researcher: Dung Le

Research Supervisor: Dr. Maria Cheung

Thesis Research Consent Form For Further Contact

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference is only part of the process of the informed consent of the research. I would ask that you be willing to meet with me for further interview(s) if I have further questions during my analysis of this study. The date, time and location of the interview will be at your convenience. In the further interviews, you will have all the rights as respondent compare to the first interview.

The information will be kept confidential as the first interview.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding the further interview in this research project

Signature of Participant_____

Date_____

Signature of Researcher_____

Date_____

Appendix VI. Thesis research consent form for individual feedback

Research Project Title: Vietnamese Couples' Perceptions on the Factors that Contribute to Satisfaction in Long-Term Marriage

Graduate Student Researcher: Dung Le

Research Supervisor: Dr. Maria Cheung

Thesis research consent form for individual feedback

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your record and reference is only part of the process of the informed consent of the research.

After I write up my findings of my study, I would like to invite you individually for feedback on my study findings, approximately two months from the time of the last interview. I will contact you by telephone to arrange a face to face individual meeting. The date, time and location of the feedback meeting will be at your convenience.

The feedback meeting will be in Vietnamese approximately in one hour. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not want to attend another face to face session, please let me know another alternative way that you prefer for the feedback session, I will accommodate your preference.

The information will be kept confidential as the first interview and will be destroyed at the same time with the other information when the thesis is completed.

Signature of Participant _____ Date _____

Signature of Researcher _____ Date _____

Appendix VII. Questions and Probes

1. What were the reasons for you to immigrate to Canada?
2. How did the immigration process affect your marriage?

VII.1. Motivation

1. What makes you stay together?
2. Are you satisfied with your marriage?
3. What does marital satisfaction mean to you?
4. What makes your marriage satisfying?
5. What are the key factors you perceive to be contributing to the long-term satisfaction of your marriage?
6. What do you do to achieve marital satisfaction in your marriage?
7. Do you still find your spouse loveable and attractive?

VII.2. Division of Household Labour

1. How do you handle household chores? Who does what?
2. Do you ask your spouse to help with the chores? How often?
3. How does the frequency of your husband's participation in the household chores affect your marital relationship?
4. As a husband, how does your participation in the chores affect your marital relationship?

VII.3. Decision making

1. How do you make major decisions?
2. Do you consult one another on your decisions?
3. Who makes decision on household matters?
4. Who decides for children school and education?
5. If you buy a car/house or have a major expenditure, who makes the final decision?

VII.4. Communication

1. How do you express your intimacy?
2. How do you express affection to each other?
3. Do you feel you have a balance between individual and couplehood?
4. Do you respect your spouse's independence? How?
5. Do you share with your spouse about what you want and need?
6. Do you spend free time together? How?

VII.5. Problem Solving

1. When you are under stress as a couple, what do you do?
2. When you disagree what do you do?
3. Do you have difficulty in finding ways to solve your problem? Explain.
4. Do you rely on friends or relatives to help you solve the problem between you?
5. How do you feel your spouse cooperates with you in solving problems?
6. Are you willing to adjust to change?