Journal of Family Issues
31(6) 727–747

DOI: 10.1177/0192513X09358566
http://jfi.sagepub.com
SAGE

A Typology of Marital Quality of Enduring Marriages in Israel

Orna Cohen,[1] Yael Geron,[1] and Alva Farchi[1]

Abstract

This article presents a typology of enduring marriages of Israeli couples married for at least 40 years. Based on the view that marital quality is a multidimensional phenomenon, the typology is derived from a cluster analysis of responses of husbands and wives in 51 couples to the ENRICH scale items. Three types of enduring marriages were found: vitalized, satisfactory, and conflictual. Vitalized marriages were characterized by high scores on both the intrinsic (e.g., mutual acceptance, communication, conflict resolution) and extrinsic (e.g., financial management, relations with relatives and friends) aspects of marriage. Satisfactory marriages were characterized by lower scores on the intrinsic aspects but relatively high scores on the extrinsic ones. Conflictual marriages were characterized by difficulties in both aspects. Some clinical implications are suggested and further quantitative studies of enduring marriages are urged.

Keywords

enduring marriages, old adults, typology of marital quality, Israel

Introduction

The great increase in longevity during the past half century has brought with it large numbers of couples in long, enduring marriages, generally defined as

[1]Tel-Aviv University, Israel

Corresponding Author:
Orna Cohen, Bob Shapell School of Social Work, Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv, Israel
Email: ornacoh@post.tau.ac.il

lasting for a minimum of nearly 40 (Bachand & Caron, 2001) or 50 (Dickson, 1997) years. These are couples who have chosen to stay together over an era when divorce rates have steadily increased and divorce has become a feasible option for most people. By definition, they are elderly couples in a distinct life phase. Their children are grown and have long left home. Most are retired. They can look back on many years together, but forward to fewer, as failing health, reduced functioning, and loss of friends and relatives through illness, death, and other causes all affect their daily lives, as individuals and couples, and stand as reminders of their own mortality (Birchler, 1992; Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; Duvall & Miller, 1985; Nichols, 1988). Given the length and distinct context of enduring marriages, we cannot assume that they resemble shorter marriages at earlier life stages.

Nonetheless, almost all the existing literature on marriage focuses on couples in the early (Johnson, Huston, & Levinger, 1992; Lawerence, Kimberly, & Cobb, 2007) and mid-years of their marriages (Carstensen, Gottman, & Levenson, 1995; Holist & Miller, 2005), especially in the transition to parenthood and in midlife, whereas the literature on enduring marriages is sparse (Lindahl, Malik, & Bradbury, 1997). Moreover, the empirical research on marriage consists almost entirely of studies that examine the association between marital satisfaction or marital quality and a single feature of the marriage, whether communication, conflict management, intimacy, role division, or commitment to the marriage and spouse. Nevertheless, because marital quality, like the marital relationship, is a multidimensional phenomenon (Lavee & Olson, 1993), these studies shed only limited light on enduring marriages.

This study attempts to gain further understanding of enduring marriages by developing a typology of such marriages. To encompass the many facets of marriage, the typology incorporates both marital satisfaction and what may be viewed as nine core components of the marital relationship: mutual acceptance, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sex and affection, children and parenting, family and friends, and equalitarian role orientation (Lavee & Olson, 1993). The aims of the study include identifying the various patterns, or types, of enduring marriages and the features that distinguish them from one another.

Typologies of Marriage

The typologies of marriage available to date may be divided into three kinds: heuristic typologies, empirical typologies of younger through midlife marriages, and empirical typologies of enduring marriages.

The two heuristic typologies known to the authors present theories of marital relations that presumably apply to marriages at all stages and ages.

Lewis and Spanier (1979) suggest a typology of four types of marriages that differ along the axes of quality (high or low) and stability (high or low). The authors argue that the type of marriage a couple has at any point of time depends on a host of intra- and extradyadic factors that affect the quality and stability of their marriages in dynamic and changing interactions. They do not however attempt to specify how these factors work in the different types. Marks (1989) proposes a typology of marital quality with seven types of marriages (four high-quality, three low-quality) that differ from one another in the manner in which each of the spouses balances the energies he or she places into their personal interiority, their relationship with each other, and their investment in others and the outer world. Both typologies are highly elaborate, neither has been tested, and neither makes any reference to the age of the spouses or to the stage or duration of the marriage.

The empirically based typologies vary widely in method, concerns, and age of the couples examined. The earliest, by Cuber and Haroff (1965), is based on unstructured interviews with more than 200 upper-middle-class American couples in midlife (age 35-55) who were married for 10 years or more and never seriously considered divorce. Its purpose is to convey a sense of the different types of marriages in this social class. The authors do this by describing the essence of five different types of marriages. They do not however attempt to systematically compare the couples in the different types along specified features.

Most of the empirical typologies focus on young couples in the early stages of marriage. Goodrich, Ryder, and Rausch (1968) used a combination of interviews, observation, and questionnaires to identify patterns in new marriages among 50 couples, aged 18 to 25, in the 4th month of marriage. They identified eight types, differentiated by closeness to husband's family, closeness to wife's family, role orientation, and report of problems or complaints. This typology refers more to types of husbands and wives than to the couple relationship. Miller and Olson (1990) created a typology of the marital interaction of young couples, aged 18 to 27, in their 1st to 3rd year of marriage. Using cluster analysis, they identified eight types of early marriages that varied in who led the marriage (husband or wife) and in how the spouses interacted (disengaged, congenial, confrontational, cooperative, engaging, and conflicted). Their descriptions of each type however refer to many other features of the marriage (e.g., relations with relatives, financial strain) and the individual spouses (e.g., gregariousness), with little indication of how the details all fit together. Gottman (1993) created a typology based on couples married for about 5 years and aged about 30 years. Aimed at distinguishing stable from unstable marriages, the typology yielded three groups of stable couples and two groups of unstable couples.

To the best of our knowledge, only one typology, by Lavee and Olson (1993), covers longer lasting marriages. The marriages ranged in duration from 8 to 11 years, and the participants ranged in age from late adolescence through their mid-60s. This typology, based on the self-ratings of some 8,000 couples on a questionnaire tapping 10 key aspects of marital life (see below), identified seven types of couples. The typology is clear and comprehensive (in that it encompasses multiple features of the marital relationship) and enables meaningful comparison between types. However, despite the wide range in the duration of the marriage, the mean was only 10 years; and the mean age of the participants was the early 30s. Moreover, no attempt is made to determine whether different patterns, or types, characterize different duration/age groups.

As far as we know, there are only two typologies of enduring marriages, both of them based entirely on qualitative methods. The first, by Weishaus and Field (1988), is based on case records of 17 marriages that lasted between 50 and 69 years. The records are of interviews with the couples conducted at four life stages: young adulthood, middle age, young-old age, and old-old age. The taxonomy describes the trajectories of the marriages in terms of the stability of their emotional tenor. Four patterns are identified: stable positive, stable neutral, stable negative, and curvilinear, characterized by a high level of marital satisfaction and affect in the early years of the marriage, a drop in the middle years, and a rise in the later years. The authors' concern however is with charting the continuity and change in long-term relationships rather than with the quality of enduring marriages. The only features of the marriage consistently noted within and across the types are the nature of the affect and degree of closeness. Within each type, the authors separately discuss each couple that fits it to show the internal variations.

The second typology, by Dickson (1995), is based on content analysis of stories typifying their marital life that were told by couples who had been married for at least 50 years. Dickson (1995) identifies three types of couples in long-lasting marriages: connected couples, characterized by closeness, intimacy, and dependency; functional separate couples, who are committed to and supportive of one another but also highly independent of each another; and dysfunctional separate couples, characterized by distance and dissatisfaction with the marriage. The number of couples that were interviewed for the typology is not disclosed.

The typology of enduring marriages—defined here as first and only marriages of at least 40 years' duration—that is presented in this article shares Dickson's (1995) focus on the quality of the marriages. In contrast to both Dickson's (1995) and Weishaus and Field's (1988) typologies, however, it

uses a quantitative methodology, which enables examining a larger number of couples, lends greater objectivity to the findings, and enables replication and comparison to other groups of married persons who differ in age, culture, and other factors that may affect their marriages.

More specifically, the typology is based on Olson's (1981) concept of marital quality as a multidimensional phenomenon, reflected in the core components of the marital relationship (mutual acceptance, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sex and affection, children and parenting, family and friends, and equalitarian role orientation), which will also be examined in the current study. As evident from the clinical literature, all these components are potential sources of marital problems and conflict (Olson, Fournier, & Druckman, 1986) but also areas in which married couples can experience closeness and pleasure. To assess these aspects, Olson et al. (1986) developed the ENRICH (Evaluating & Nurturing Relationship Issues, Communication, Happiness) scale. Like the Lavee and Olson (1993) multiage typology of marital quality discussed above, the present typology is derived from cluster analysis of the ratings of husbands and wives on the ENRICH.

The scale has two advantages for the present endeavor. One is that in contrast to the other approaches described above, it enables us to create a typology based on virtually all the key aspects of marital life. The other, which is important because the study was carried out in Israel, is that there is a Hebrew version of the scale with proven reliability and validity (see Method).

In addition, this study queries the respondents' marital satisfaction. The literature does not always differentiate between marital quality and marital satisfaction, although they are measured differently and refer to different things. Marital quality is measured by querying components of the relationship chosen by the researcher and is thus determined by criteria established by the researcher. Marital satisfaction refers to the respondents' subjective feelings about their marriages. Glenn (1990) found high correlation between marital quality and marital satisfaction. Because the two are not identical, however, it is worth investigating their relationship in different marital types.

The Cohort and Their Marriages

Average life expectancy in Israel is 78 for men and 82 for women, which is much the same as that in the United States (Kung, Hoyert, Xu, Murphy, & Division of Vital Statistics, 2008). This means that Israeli couples who are still married in later life are likely to have some 13 years together after the mandatory retirement age of 65. In 2005, 10% of the population of Israel

were 65 or older, but less than 1% of the marriages were among couples of this age group.

Most of those who were in enduring marriages in Israel when the study was carried out were born between the First and Second World Wars. Some were born in the prestate communities of what was then termed Palestine; most immigrated from Europe or the Arabic-speaking countries of North Africa and the Middle East. Most experienced persecution in their countries of origin, culminating in the Holocaust in Europe and in violent attacks (pogroms) in the countries in North Africa and the Middle East when Israel's statehood was declared. Most experienced one or another degree of dislocation with their move to Israel. All had firsthand experiences of war, many in Europe and all of them in Israel.

They are also likely to have shared the value that Jewish culture and tradition place on marriage and family. The Jewish religion makes marriage and procreation a central commandment and has no place for celibacy. Historically, the discrimination and persecution to which Jews have been subjected have imbued the family with the quality of a haven and refuge in a hostile and treacherous world and led to an emphasis on intergenerational connection and obligation (Rosen & Weltman, 1996). Jewish religious law provides a degree of protection for married women by requiring that both marriage and divorce be freely agreed to by both parties (Bulka, 1996).

In comparison to other industrialized countries, Israel is still a familistic society. Marriage and fertility rates are high relative to those in other Western countries, and divorce rates lower (Cohen, 2003). The elderly tend to remain closer to and play a larger role in the lives of their children and grandchildren than elsewhere (Lowenstein & Ogg, 2003), owing both to cultural norms and the very small size of the country, which permits close geographic proximity and frequent personal contact among family members.

With this, one must be careful not to overgeneralize. Israel's elderly population is made up of two main groups: Ashkenazi Jews hailing from Eastern Europe and Sephardic Jews hailing from the Arabic-speaking countries of North Africa and the Middle East. The traditional Jewish family, like many others, was patriarchal and male dominant. Women's domain was the home, and their participation in religious observance was limited by religious injunctions and family obligations (Rosen & Weltman, 1996). However, the concepts and practices of marriage among Jews have always varied with place and time. Thus, in pre–World War II Europe, Jewish women took part in the rich cultural life of the Jewish community and some played a major economic role in the family, whether to help make ends meet or to enable the husband to devote time to study the Torah. In the East, Jewish women, like

their non-Jewish counterparts, tended to be more restricted to the home and more dependent on their husbands. But this generalization pertains more to Jewish women in the countryside than to those in the large cities. Moreover, with their immigration to Israel, where gender equality was an ideal, though not fully honored in practice, their status increased and dependency decreased (Rabin & Lahav, 2001).

In addition, values such as democracy, gender equality, individualism, and self-actualization, which have loosened the bonds of marriage throughout the West, have also seeped into marriages among Jews, to the extent that some Jewish rabbis and scholars bemoan the disarray of Jewish marriages (e.g., Bulka, 1986). These changes, coming on large initial differences, make for a rich social mosaic, which defies easy sociohistorical generalizations.

Method

Study Participants

The study participants were 51 married couples, drawn from three sources: a list provided by several municipal Welfare Departments in the center of Israel, social clubs in protected living facilities, and snowballing. The criteria for inclusion were that participants be Jewish couples more than 60 years of age and in an enduring marriage, defined as a first and only marriage of at least 40 years' duration. Participation was voluntary.

Questionnaires were sent to each member of the couple by post with stamped return envelopes addressed to one of the researchers. In the 10 months between early March 2004 and the end of January 2005, a total of 140 questionnaires were sent out and 69 were returned (49.3%). Of those returned, 18 (12.9%) were removed from the sample because the questionnaires were completed in full by only one of the spouses. Questionnaires were answered anonymously; couples were identified by the number on their questionnaires.

The men ranged in age from 65 to more than 90 ($M = 73.2$, $SD = 6.96$), the women from 65 to 89 ($M = 69.7$, $SD = 7.34$). The couples had been married on average for 50 years and had a mean of 2.9 children. With respect to education, 19.6% of the men had 10 or fewer years of schooling, 39.2% had 11 to 12 years, and 42.11% had 13 or more; of the women, 33.3% had 10 or fewer years, 25.5% had 11 to 12 years, and 41.2% had 13 or more. Self-reported economic status ranged from average through excellent on a 6-point scale, where average was 3 and excellent 1; none of the participants reported being poor (2) or very poor (1). Some three quarters (75.4%) of the

respondents were of European or American origin; 23.6% were of Middle Eastern or North African origin. With respect to religiosity, 62% identified themselves as secular, 30% as traditional, 6% as orthodox, and 2% as highly orthodox. The vast majority reported average to excellent health, with only 2% reporting poor health. Only seven, three men and four women (five couples in all), reported that they had considered divorce at some time in the past.

Measures

The main study instrument was the Hebrew version (Lavee & Olson, 1993) of Olson et al.'s (1986) ENRICH scale, a two-part self-report scale. This is a well-known scale with high reliability (Fowers & Olson, 1993).

Marital quality is measured by the first part of the scale. In the original version, this part consists of 125 statements tapping the quality of the marriage along 10 dimensions. The Hebrew version of the scale (Lavee, 1995) contains 95 statements tapping 9 of the original 10 dimensions: personality issues (adjustment to and satisfaction with the partner's behavior, traits, and habits), communication (perception of being understood by the partner and ability to share feelings), conflict resolution (attitudes about conflicts in the relationship and comfort with the way problems are handled and differences resolved), financial management (attitudes and concerns about how economic issues are managed and agreement on financial matters), leisure activities (individual's preferences and couple's consensus about the use of leisure time, interests, time together, and activities), sexual relationship (feelings and concerns about the expression of affection and sexuality in the relationship), children and parenting (consensus on child-rearing decisions and satisfaction with definition of parental roles), family and friends (feelings and concerns about relationships with relatives, in-laws, and friends), and equalitarian roles (attitudes toward division of labor in the home). The "religious orientation" dimension was removed because it lacked validity in the Israeli population, as were the couple cohesion and marital satisfaction scales, for the same reason. For the purpose of this study we also omitted six items from the parenting and children subscale, which were irrelevant to the elderly study participants (e.g., "We agree on how to discipline the children"). For each statement, respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which it applied to them on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly applies*, 5 = *doesn't apply at all*). Where necessary, the ratings were reversed so that the higher the rating, the better the marital relationship.

Because the study focuses on the marital relationship, both the global and subscale scores were calculated for the couple. To reflect both the marital characteristics and the differences in spouses' assessments, the couple scores were calculated as the mean of the scores of the two spouses minus the discrepancy in their individual scores.

The Hebrew version of the scale showed very high reliability for both the men ($\alpha = .89$) and the women ($\alpha = .91$) in the sample. Test–retest reliability ranged from $\alpha = .77$ on the leisure activities through $\alpha = .92$ on the sexual relationship subscale. Internal consistency ranged from $\alpha = .68$ on the equalitarian orientation subscale through $\alpha = .86$ on marital satisfaction. In the current study, internal consistency was $\alpha = .91$ for the total sample, $\alpha = .89$ for men, and $\alpha = .91$ for women.

The ENRICH report also enables assessing marital quality by comparing the spouses' positive agreement on each item. Positive couple agreement (PCA) was identified when both spouses individually indicated a high level of agreement (4 or 5) with the item. These scores range from 0% to 100% and represent the level of couple consensus.

Demographic variables and marital satisfaction were assessed in the second part of the scale. In addition to the standard demographic measures (e.g., age, years married, number of children, residence, income, education, occupation) queried in both the English and Hebrew versions of the scale, we queried two variables, general health and relationship with adult children, which are relevant to the age group.

Marital satisfaction was queried by three items: The first two, drawn from the original scale, were (a) How satisfied are you with your marriage? and (b) How satisfied do you think your spouse is with the marriage? These too were rated on a 5-point scale, with 1 = *highly dissatisfied*, 5 = *highly satisfied*. The third question was whether the respondent had or had not considered divorce, answered dichotomously.

Analysis and Results

Cluster Analysis

The classification was based on the global and per-dimension means of each couple's ENRICH scores. The classification was carried out in two phases: In the first phase, a Q-analysis (inverse factor analysis) and a hierarchical agglomerative cluster analysis were performed to seek the number of clusters and structure of similarities**.** The results indicated that the data were best arranged into three clusters. A larger number of clusters would have created poorly

Table 1. ENRICH Scale Means and MANOVA on Marital Types ($n = 51$)

	Vitalized couples ($n = 17, 33\%$)		Satisfactory couples ($n = 22, 43\%$)		Conflictual couples ($n = 12, 24\%$)		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*
Personality issues	4.04	.52	2.95	.43	2.40	.59	41.89**
Communication	4.05	.39	3.25	.43	2.64	.36	44.54**
Conflict resolution	3.82	.49	2.79	.39	2.34	.42	55.89**
Financial management	4.09	.43	3.63	.51	3.03	.73	13.42**
Leisure activities	3.79	.38	3.32	.42	2.94	.36	17.11**
Sexual relationship	4.12	.51	3.69	.40	2.89	.39	27.81**
Children and parenting	4.12	.37	3.74	.70	3.61	.36	3.70*
Family and friends	4.18	.37	3.64	.41	3.40	.38	16.02**
Equalitarian orientation	3.76	.68	3.75	.34	3.03	.37	9.91**
Global measure	4.09	.26	3.44	.26	3.02	.22	68.73**

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

differentiated groups. In the second phase, a *k*-means cluster analysis was carried out to classify the couples into types based on the results obtained in the first phase.

After the clusters were derived, a one-way analysis of variance was carried out to examine the differences among them, on the basis of both the global scores and the scores on each of the dimensions. This showed a significant difference in all the scores, with the largest being in problem solving, $F(2, 48) = 55.89$, $p < .01$, and the smallest in children and parenthood, $F(2, 48) = 3.70$, $p < .05$.

The three clusters were vitalized marriages, satisfactory marriage, and conflictual marriages. Vitalized marriages, which constituted 33% ($n = 17$) of the sample, were characterized by high means in all nine dimensions. The satisfactory marriages, which constituted 43% ($n = 22$) of the sample, showed lower mean scores. The conflictual marriages, which constituted 24% ($n = 12$) of the sample, had the lowest means on all the dimensions.

The results of the analysis of variance are presented in Table 1. As can be seen, the mean global scores decrease from the vitalized cluster to the conflictual cluster. These findings indicate that the clusters are differentiated by the quality of their marriages, globally and in all the dimensions. Post hoc Scheffe tests showed significant differences among all three clusters on the global score and on five of the dimensions: personality issues,

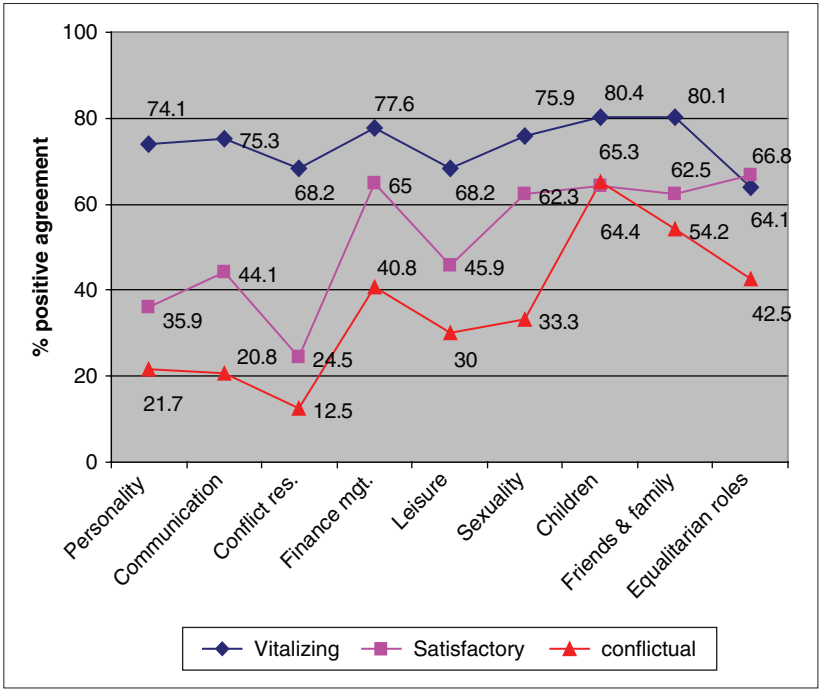

Figure 1. Three types of couple relationship

communications, conflict resolution, leisure activities, and sexual relationships. On the remaining four dimensions, financial management, children and parenting, family and friends, and equalitarian roles, the Scheffe test showed no significant difference between the vitalized marriage and satisfactory marriage clusters but significant differences between the conflictual marriages and these two types.

PCA

Figure 1 shows the three clusters' PCA scores on each of the dimensions. As can be seen, the pattern is quite similar to that revealed by the couple means. The vitalized marriages showed the highest levels of PCA, followed by steep drops in the PCA on most dimensions in the satisfactory marriages and another set of steep drops in the PCA scores of the conflictual marriages.

Table 2. Percentage of Positive Couple Agreement by Marital Type ($n = 51$)

	Vitalized couples ($n = 17, 33\%$)		Satisfactory couples ($n = 22, 43\%$)		Conflictual couples ($n = 12, 24\%$)		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*(2, 48)
Personality issues	74.12	21.81	36.00	18.17	21.70	14.70	32.30**
Communication	75.29	16.63	44.10	21.30	21.00	14.43	32.21**
Conflict resolution	68.23	17.80	24.54	14.71	12.50	7.54	63.83**
Financial management	77.65	14.90	65.00	21.80	40.84	25.80	11.13**
Leisure activities	68.23	14.70	45.91	21/75	30.00	16.51	15.83**
Sexual relationship	75.90	21.52	62.27	20.70	33.33	11.54	17.38**
Children and parenting	80.40	17.91	64.40	32.24	65.27	15.00	2.28
Family and friends	80.15	18.80	62.50	22.16	54.17	22.40	5.91**
Equalitarian orientation	84.12	26.00	66.82	15.55	42.50	12.90	6.75**

**$p < .01$.

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations of the PCA in all its dimensions. As can be seen, a one-way analysis of variance was carried out and shows significant differences on all the dimensions except children and parenting.

Post hoc Scheffe tests showed that all three clusters differed significantly from one another in personality issues, communication, conflict resolution, leisure activities, and sexual relationship. The tests also showed that the conflictual cluster had significantly lower PCA scores than both the other clusters on financial management and equalitarian roles.

Marital Satisfaction

The findings on marital satisfaction are presented in Table 3. As seen in Table 3, two one-way ANOVAs show significant group differences among the husbands, $F(2, 48) = 6.14$, $p < .01$, and wives, ($F(2, 48) = 3.67$, $p < .01$. Post hoc Scheffe tests show that the marital satisfaction of both husbands and wives in the conflictual cluster differs significantly from the satisfaction of the spouses in the other two groups.

Two-way ANOVAs show a significant difference between husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction, $F(1, 48) = 6.99$, $p < .05$. A post hoc Scheffe test shows that the difference was significant in all the clusters.

Table 3. Husbands' and Wives' Satisfaction by Marital Type

	Vitalized couples (n = 17, 33%)		Satisfactory couples (n = 22, 43%)		Conflictual couples (n = 12, 24%)		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*
Husbands' satisfaction	4.82	0.39	4.68	0.48	4.25	0.45	6.13**
Wives' satisfaction	4.71	0.47	4.32	0.72	4.08	0.67	3.67*

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Sociodemographic Features

Wilks's Lambda tests for differences in age, education, financial status, number of children, number of years married, religiosity, and self-reported health showed no difference in these variables in the three clusters. The findings on relationship with adult children differed for husbands and wives. No group difference was found in the husbands' and wives' reported relationships with their adult children. Divorce had been considered only by persons in the conflictual cluster. That is, all five couples in which either one or both spouses had considered divorce were of the conflictual type.

Discussion

Our findings yield three different types of enduring marriages: vitalized marriages, satisfactory marriages, and conflictual marriages.

Vitalized marriages: The couples in the vitalized marriages report relatively high marital quality, with respect to both the internal, more intimate aspects of the marriage and the more external and functional ones. In particular, based on both their marital quality ratings and PCA scores, they stand out from both the other two types in their intimacy and ease with one another and in the pleasure they take in each other's presence and company. They like and accept each other's personalities and behaviors, feel more understood by their partner, and are better able to share their feelings with the other. They feel more comfortable with the way problems are handled and differences resolved in their marriage, agree more with their partner on both their joint and separate leisure activities, and take more pleasure and ease in their shared affection and sex.

Satisfactory marriages: In all of these areas, which are the more intimate areas of marriage, the couples in the satisfactory marriages report lower levels of marital quality. Looking at the means, we can ascertain that the spouses in this group show a fair degree of consensus on how they spend their leisure and share affection and/or sex—albeit both to a lesser degree than the vitalized couples. They like and accept each other less, have a harder time communicating with one another, and have fewer skills for resolving their conflicts. Moreover, the large gaps in their PCA scores in these areas suggests that they are substantially less inclined than the spouses in vitalized marriages to perceive the matters relating to their intimate lives in similar ways.

With this, the couples in the satisfactory marriages do not differ from those in the vitalized marriages in the quality of the functional aspects of their marriage. They are no less of one mind about how to manage their finances and how to relate to their adult children and to their own and each other's relatives. Nor are they any more troubled about their role division. In short, the couples in the satisfactory marriages are characterized by distance or tensions in the intimate areas of marital life but handle the functional aspects of marriage fairly well.

Nonetheless, the couples in the satisfactory marriages do not report significantly lower marital satisfaction than those in the vitalized marriages. Whether this is because they are content with the distance in the intimate areas of their relationship or because they have resigned themselves to it cannot be determined from the study findings. It is of interest however that this is the only group in which the wives' perceptions of their husbands' marital satisfaction were lower than their husbands' reports. Whether the husbands overreported their satisfaction or their wives were projecting onto them their own dissatisfaction cannot be known from the study data. In either case, the disparity would seem to reflect the mixed nature of the relationship.

Conflictual marriages: The couples in the conflictual marriages have poorer marital quality in both areas. On average, these couples rate the more intimate areas of their marriage—their liking for and acceptance of one another, their ability to communicate, the way they resolve their conflicts, their consensus about their leisure activities, and their sexual and affective relations—below the midpoint of the scale: as less than moderate. With respect to the external aspects, their ratings of their financial management and role divisions just scrape the midpoint. The only areas where they rise above the midpoint to any extent are in their relations with persons outside their couplehood, namely, their adult children and their relatives and friends.

The substantially poorer quality of their marriages than those of the other two types is reflected in the lower marital satisfaction of both the husbands and wives, as well as in the fact that divorce had been considered in nearly

half of these marriages, though not in any of the marriages in the other two types. One may wonder how much it was their relations with and duties to their children and relatives that kept the conflictual couples together through the trials of their marriage.

Our identification of three types of marriages that differ in meaningful ways across different dimensions is consistent with the other two typologies of enduring marriages (Dickson, 1995; Weishaus & Field, 1988). Like them, the present typology—based on nine core components of the marital relationship—shows that these marriages are not all of a kind, any more than are shorter marriages in earlier life stages, and that not all couples in long, enduring marriages live together happily.

At the same time, the differences between the types were not large, as evident both in the means and in the relatively modest significances. At least part of the reason seems to be that the spouses in the conflictual marriages did not, on average, rate the various aspects of their marriage, even the intrinsic ones, all that low. Whether this reflects what Dickson (1995) claims the relative uniformity and stability of marriages in later life, the fact that couples who found their marriages unbearable had divorced cannot be known, or the features of the cohort, Jewish Israelis of a generation for whom marriage and the family were key values, cannot be known from this study.

In addition to enabling the identification of three types of enduring marriages, our analyses allow us to look across the types at the components of the marital relationships. Across all three types, the greatest differences were, first, in the couples' conflict resolution, followed by their communication and their liking and acceptance of each other's personalities. With the exception of sexual relations and affection, these areas are the most intimate of the nine aspects queried. Our findings attest to their pivotal role in distinguishing types of enduring marriages.

Of the three most distinguishing components, conflict resolution not only differed significantly across all three types of marriages but was also rated lower than any of the other aspects of the marriage in all three types. These findings both attest to the difficulty of resolving conflicts in all types of marriage, including vitalized ones, and make the ability to resolve conflicts a major determinant of the quality of enduring marriages.

In contrast, the external aspects of marriage were considerably less powerful in distinguishing among the types of marriages and, for the most part, showed higher within-group scores, especially in the satisfactory and conflictual marriages.

The lowest between-group differences and the highest within-group scores were in the area of children and parenting. This is an area that is widely discussed in studies of the transition to parenthood in young marriages

(Cowan & Cowan, 2000) and in connection with the personal well-being of older parents (Cohen, Geron, & Farchi, 2008; Orbuch, House, Mero, & Webster, 1996; Ward, & Spitze, 1998) but has not been discussed in relation to the quality of marriage in later life, probably because it does not differentiate among such marriages. Three explanations may be offered for the present findings. One, local, is that Israel is both a familistic and a child-centered society. Grandparents tend to remain involved in the lives of their children and grandchildren, and there is a good deal of cross-generational commitment (Karsten, 2007; Lowenstein, Katz, & Gur-Yaish, 2007; Lowenstein, & Ogg, 2003). Two, it has to do with features of the life stage of couples in enduring marriages. This is a stage in life when the children are grown and, for the most part, do not live at home and require neither discipline nor care, so that there is less cause for disagreement about parenthood. It is also a stage in life when persons incur many losses. These may make relations with their children more important for both spouses as they feel more secure, and become more inclined to seek pleasure and enjoyment in what remains.

After children and parenting, the low differentiating aspects of the marriages in this study are, in rising order, equalitarian roles, financial management, friends and family, and leisure. Without comparing to other age groups, we cannot know whether these external aspects of marriage are always less powerful indicators of marital quality than the intrinsic aspects or whether their lower power to differentiate is particular to late-life enduring marriages. Still, several features of later life might help to explain these findings. The relatively low differentiating power of equalitarian roles may be explained by a reduction in gender-stereotypic role division once the children have left home (Dickson, 1995; Story et al., 2007) and/or by the fact that with both spouses retired, nonequalitarian role division (whether in terms of housework or the responsibility for providing) may become less burdensome. The relatively low differentiating power of financial management may be explained by the fact that there are fewer decisions to make about investment and spending later in life. Along similar lines, there are also probably fewer in-laws and friends to quarrel about.

Among the questions we had in drawing a typology of very long marriages that lasted into late life was whether and how they were similar to or different from marriages of fewer years at earlier life stages. Unfortunately, our study yields only very partial answers to this question.

In some ways, the three types of enduring marriage we identified resemble the three types of enduring marriages identified by Dickson (1995). Like Dickson's (1995) "connected couples," our vitalized couples are characterized by good communication, intimacy, and high satisfaction. Like her

"functional separates," the couples in our "satisfactory" marriages work well together but show less intimacy. Like her "dysfunctional separates," the couples in our conflictual marriages communicate poorly, disagree on many issues, and exhibit a great deal of dissatisfaction with the marriage and one another. However, more detailed comparison is impossible because Dickson did not compare her couples on many of the aspects of marriage that we assessed (e.g., children and parenting, financial management).

Nor can we adequately compare our typology with the existent typologies of younger marriages. Like Dickson's (1995), most of them use different methodologies and do not chart at all the aspects of the marriage that we do. It is tempting to make comparisons to Lavee and Olson's (1993) typology of marriages of 8 to 11 years' duration because we used the same instrument. A cursory look suggests similarities and differences. For example, conflict resolution also tended to differentiate between the better marriages and those that were more problematic in Lavee and Olson's (1993) typology. On the other hand, there was much less positive couple agreement on issues of children and parenting than among our older couples. This difference may reflect the change from younger marriages, when parents are actually raising their children, to older marriages, when the children are adults and no longer living in the parental home.

At this stage in the research, however, it cannot really be said that the similarities point to similarities across the marital span, or that the differences necessarily reflect differences in what makes for marital quality at different points in the life span. Although the typologies are based on the same instrument, there are too many differences in their fundamentals for them to be fully comparable. These include the country where the studies were carried out, the number of types of marriages that could be derived from their different sample sizes, and aspects of the scoring of the ENRICH and derivation of the clusters. Nonetheless, our systematic examination may serve as a basis for comparative work in the future.

The study has several limitations. Caution must be exercised in generalizing from the patterns of enduring marriage found in this study. We cannot know how much the findings among Jewish Israelis pertain to enduring marriages in other cultures and countries. It should be recalled that our study participants were of a generation that in keeping with Jewish tradition, was raised to place great value on marriage and family but reached old age in a culture and society that has given increasing centrality to the individual. In addition, many were immigrants. Many had suffered persecution in their country of origin; many had experienced dislocation on their arrival in Israel; and all of them had been directly exposed to a succession of wars aimed at

their annihilation. Understanding whether and how these factors may have shaped their marriages is beyond the scope of this study.

Nor can we know how well the findings we obtained from our relatively well-educated, middle-class sample apply to enduring marriages in other socioeconomic strata in Israel. This feature of the sample reflects the greater accessibility of persons from this socioeconomic stratum and their greater willingness to take part in research. Unfortunately, most of the extant typologies of marriage suffer from similar problems of generalizability.

Finally, although the sample size of 51 couples is larger than in many studies, it is too small to enable the derivation of more, and more nuanced, types and to allow within-group comparisons. It is also too small to enable examining the relationship, if any, between the varied backgrounds and life experiences of the study participants and the quality and features of their marriage.

The size problem is common to research focused on couples because it is often difficult to get both spouses to participate. It is also common to studies on elderly persons. It is not only that elderly couples are scarce relative to elderly persons who are on their own, whether through widowhood or divorce. Problems of health and mental competence make it impossible for many elderly persons to participate in research. Part of the sample size problem stemmed from the high nonresponse rate of about 50% to our postal questionnaire—a method of data gathering we chose so as to enable the study participants to maintain their privacy and anonymity.

The small sample size means that we cannot explain the relative prevalence of the different types of enduring marriages. In our sample, the vitalized marriages were the most prevalent, the conflictual marriages the least, and the satisfactory marriages in the middle. This differs from Cuber and Haroff's (1965) typology of midlife marriages, based on hundreds of interviews, in which the most common marriages were those that were functional but not intimate or exciting, whereas vitalized marriages were rare. Given the way our data were gathered, it is impossible to know whether the difference reflects differences in younger and older marriages or sample bias. It cannot be ruled out that couples with conflictual marriages were less inclined to participate in our study than couples with vitalized marriages.

The study findings have some practical implications for clinical work with elderly couples. Emphasis in clinical work with the elderly, including couples, tends to be on social matters, namely, helping them to get involved in social and community activities. Our typology suggests that clinical work is also in order to help elderly couples in both satisfactory and conflictual marriages to derive somewhat more pleasure from one another. Although it may be unrealistic to expect major changes in late life, especially among the

old-old, some of the young-old might be helped to improve the quality of their lives together. One way may be to encourage them to initiate more contact and activities with their children, because this is an area of relatively high couple agreement in all three types of marriage. Moreover, as with younger couples, an effort might be made to bring elderly couples in satisfactory and conflictual marriages to accept one another more; to communicate, listen, and speak to one another with greater respect and openness; and to develop and apply conflict resolution skills.

Further study of marriages that endure into late life is urged. Such studies should include quantitative studies similar to this, in different countries and cultures as well as studies comparing enduring marriages with marriages at other stages of life. In addition, our knowledge would be enriched by qualitative explorations of questions such as what makes for the differences in marital quality among the elderly and what has kept these couples together.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no conflicts of interests with respect to the authorship and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article.

References

Bachand, L. L., & Caron, S. L. (2001). Ties that bind: A qualitative study of happy long-term marriages. *Contemporary Family Therapy, 23*, 105-121.

Birchler, G. R. (1992). Marriage. In V. B. Van Hasselt & M. Hersen (Eds.), *Handbook of social development: A lifespan perspective* (pp. 397-419). New York: Plenum.

Bulka, R. P. (1986). *A Halakhic ethic*. New York: Ktav Publishing House, Yeshivah University Press.

Carstensen, L., Gottman , J., & Levenson, R. (1995) Emotional behavior in long-term marriage. *Psychology and Aging, 10*, 140-149.

Carter, B., & McGoldrick, M. (1989). *The changing family life cycle*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Cohen, O. (2003). The Israeli family. In *International encyclopedia of marriage and family* (Vol. 2, pp. 960-964). New York: Macmillan.

Cohen, O., Geron, Y., & Farchi, E. (2008). *Marital satisfaction and well-being among enduring couples*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Cowan, C., & Cowan, P. (2000). *When partners become parents: The big life change for couples*. New York: Basic Books.

Cuber, J. F., & Haroff, P. (1965). *The significant Americans: A study of sexual behavior among the affluent*. New York: Appleton Century-Crofts.

Dickson, F. C. (1995). The best is yet to be: Research on long-lasting relationships. In J. T. Woods & S. Duck (Eds.), *Understanding relationship processes: Off the beaten track* (pp. 22-50). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Dickson, F. C. (1997). Aging and marriage: Understanding the long-term, later-life marriage. In W. K. Halford & H. J. Markman (Eds.), *Clinical handbook of marriage and couples intervention* (pp. 255-269). New York: John Wiley.

Duvall, E. M., & Miller, B. C. (1985). *Marriage and family development*. New York: Harper & Row.

Fowers, B. J., & Olson, D. H. (1993). ENRICH marital satisfaction scale: A brief research and clinical tool. *Journal of Family Psychology, 7*, 176-185.

Glenn, N. D. (1990). Quantitative research on marital quality in the 1980s: A critical review. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 52*, 818-831.

Goodrich, W., Ryder, H., & Rausch, H. (1968). Patterns of newlywed marriage. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 30*, 383-391.

Gottman, J. M. (1993). The roles of conflict engagement, escalation, or avoidance in marital interaction: A longitudinal view of five types of couples. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 61*, 6-15.

Holist, C. S., & Miller, R. B. (2005). Perception of attachment style and marital quality in middle marriage. *Family Relations, 54*, 46-57.

Johnson, M. P., Huston, T. L., & Levinger, G. (1992). Patterns of marriage life among young couples. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationship, 9*, 343-364.

Karsten, H. (2007). Proximity and contacts between older parents and their children: A European comparison. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 69*, 157-173.

Kung, H.-C., Hoyert, D. L., Xu, J., Murphy, S. L., & Division of Vital Statistics. (2008). Deaths: Final data for 2005. *National Vital Statistics Reports, 56*(10)

Lavee, Y. (1995, October). *ENRICH: Research and clinicians directions*. Paper presented at the annual psychological conference, Ben-Gurion University, Israel.

Lavee, Y., & Olson, D. H. (1993). Seven types of marriage: Empirical typology based on ENRICH. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 19*, 325-340.

Lawerence, E., Kimberly, N., & Cobb, R. J. (2007). Prenatal expectations and marital satisfaction over the transition to parenthood. *Journal of Family Psychology, 21*, 155-164.

Lewis, R. A., & Spanier, G. B. (1979). Theorizing about the quality and stability of marriage. In W. R. Burr, R. Hill, F. I. Nye, & I. L. Reiss (Eds.), *Contemporary theories about the family* (pp. 268-294). New York: Free Press.

Lindahl, K. M., Malik, N. M., & Bradbury, T. N. (1997). The developmental course of couples' relationships. In W. K. Halford & H. J. Markman (Eds.), *Clinical handbook of marriage and couples interventions* (pp. 203-223). New York: John Wiley.

Lowenstein, A., Katz, R., & Gur-Yaish, N. (2007). Reciprocity in parent–child exchange and life satisfaction among the elderly: A cross-national perspective. *Journal of Social Issues, 63*, 865-883.

Lowenstein, A., & Ogg, J. (2003). *Oasis report*. Haifa, Israel: Center of Research and Study of Aging, Haifa University.

Marks, S. R. (1989). Toward a systems theory of marital quality. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 51*, 15-26.

Miller, B. C., & Olson, D. H. (1990). Types of marital interaction: Using clusters analysis. In T. W. Draper & A. C. Marcos (Eds.), *Family variables: Conceptualization, measurement, and use* (pp. 67-69). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Nichols, W. C. (1988). *Marital therapy—An integrative approach*. New York: Guilford.

Olson, D. H. (1981). Family typologies: Bridging family research and family therapy. In E. E. Felsinger & R. A. Lewis (Eds.), *Assessing marriage: New behavioral approaches* (pp. 74-89). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Olson, D. H., Fournier, D. M., & Druckman, J. (1986). *PREPARE/ENRICH counselor manual* (2nd ed.). Minneapolis, MN: PREPARE/ENRICH Inc.

Orbuch, T. L., House, J. S., Mero, R. P., & Webster, P. S. (1996). Marital quality over the life course. *Social Psychology, 59*, 162-171.

Rabin, C., & Lahav, T. (2001). Sephardi women in Israel: Identity, family and change. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy, 13*, 33-46.

Rosen, E. J., & Weltman, S. F. (1996). Jewish families: An overview. In M. McGoldrick, J. Giordano, & J. K. Pearce (Eds.), *Ethnicity family therapy* (pp. 611-630). New York: Guilford.

Story, T. N., Berg, C. A., Smith, T. W., Beveridge, R., Henry, N. J. M., & Pearce, G. (2007). Age, marital satisfaction, and optimism as predictors of positive sentiment override in middle-aged and older married couples. *Psychology and Aging, 22*, 719-727.

Ward, R. A., & Spitze, G. S. (1998). "Sandwiched marriages": The implications of child and parent relations for marital quality in midlife. *Social Forces, 77*, 647-666.

Weishaus, S., & Field, D. (1988). A half century of marriage: Continuity or change? *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 50*, 763-774.