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## Idiomatic Expressions and Marital Relationships Over Three Stages of the Family Lifespan

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IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS AND MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS  
OVER THREE STAGES OF THE FAMILY LIFESPAN

by

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## ABSTRACT

### IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS AND MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS OVER THREE STAGES OF THE FAMILY LIFESPAN

Meredith T. Raynor  
Old Dominion University, 2004  
Director: Dr. Thomas J. Socha

*the future belongs to those who believe in  
the beauty of their dreams*  
---Eleanor Roosevelt

In interpersonal communication language shared between two people becomes important in the everyday life of relational participants. Even more so, the language shared between married couples is vital because of their “unique relationship”. Part of that language involves the symbols, gestures and words called idioms that have specialized meaning for the marital dyad.

This thesis sought to discover what idioms are identified among married couples at three stages of the family lifespan, newlyweds, couples with children and empty nest couples as they seek to maintain a system of “personalized communication” as it relates to their marital satisfaction (Breuss & Pearson, 1993, p. 609). One goal of this study was to determine what patterns may exist between marital couples across the family lifespan. Since previous research seems to indicate an increase followed by a decrease, this study also sought to establish if there is a correlation between the frequency of idiom usage with husband’s and or wives’ own ratings of marital satisfaction. These questions thus add a new dimension to the study relating to intimacy and private talk among marital dyads.

This thesis is dedicated to my three angels Tiffany, Adam and Aaron  
for all of their sacrifice and love. Mommy loves you.

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## SECTION I

### INTRODUCTION

Communication in interpersonal relationships manifests itself in language and nonverbally. One particularly important aspect of language used in close relationships involves idiosyncratic language. Idiosyncratic language, or “unique or personalized” communication is behavior that is developed in particular relationships and is a part of that relationship’s culture (Breuss & Pearson, 1993). As an important part of relational culture, idiosyncratic language functions as a builder of relationship cohesiveness (Hopper, Knapp & Scott, 1981; Bell, Buerkel-Rothfuss & Gore, 1987). More importantly, idiomatic expressions, one kind of relationship symbol, have been identified as a key component in relational culture (Breuss & Pearson, 1993, p. 609). Idiomatic expressions are considered any “word, phrase or gesture that has evolved unique meanings within a specific relationship” (Knapp & Vangelisti, 2000, p. 309). According to Hopper et al., (1981), idiomatic expressions help to build cohesiveness and establish a couple’s identity. Therefore, if participants in personal relationships in general use idiomatic expressions in developing relational bonds, they may also be of particular importance among married couples and other intimates (Hopper et al., 1981, p. 24). One understudied topic concerning idiomatic expressions is their use among marital partners over the family lifespan and how the use of idiomatic expressions might affect cohesiveness. The purpose of this thesis is to study the relationship between marital couple type (newlyweds, couples with children and senior couples), spouses’ ages, frequency use of idiomatic expressions, and marital satisfaction. This topic is important

to the field of communication because it can help provide a better understanding of the intimate language system between couples over time, that can ultimately lead to satisfaction in the relationship.

## SECTION II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is a large and growing body of social science literature on relationships. However, there is still debate over what constitutes “social” relationships and “personal” relationships. One factor that has been used to distinguish between social and personal relationships is degree of closeness (Berg & Piner, 1990, p.142). The quality of exchanges that take place also separates close personal relationships from relationships that are not close (Berg & Piner, 1990). While both types of relationships may function in different ways, theorists agree that relationships, whether social or personal, typically exist to satisfy the basic need of support from others.

Social relationships are generally defined as relationships between individuals who have social bonds and similarities and, who may also provide emotional support (e.g. nurturance, reassurance and attachment). Social relationships are two sided, and can be formed with a variety of individuals (Nash, 1988, p. 121). According to Weiss (1974) social relationships have six characteristics:

- 1) The opportunity for being nurtured or feeling needed by others
- 2) Attachment
- 3) Social integration or a sense of belonging to a group who share similar interests, concerns and activities.
- 4) Reassurance of worth or value by others
- 5) Guidance or advice
- 6) Reliable alliance or persons who can be counted on for assistance. (Berg & Piner, 1990, p. 142)

Personal relationships, on the other hand “can be seen as bounded areas or ‘fields’ of permissible action within which people construct their individual ties” (Allan, 1993, p. 4). Personal relationships are highly complex. In fact, it is in personal relationships

we “find our most profound experiences of security and anxiety, power and impotence, unity and separateness” (McAdams, 1988, p.7). It is for these reasons that personal relationships, particularly “function to promote intimacy through relatively spontaneous and effectively positive patterns of behavior” (McAdams, 1988, p. 17).

Along with the ongoing study of general motives that lie behind patterns of behavior in personal relationships, one researcher, Bakan (1966) believes that there are two dimensions of behavior that shape our most personal relationships: Agency and Communion. Agency deals with the how living things strive to separate from other living things and control their environment, while communion deals with how living things blend and merge with others in their environment. While both concepts are multidimensional in nature, communion focuses more on human motives of intimacy (McAdams, 1988, p. 12). Studies among close friendships show that people high in intimacy motives demonstrate a reciprocal style of interaction characterized by high levels of disclosure. However, there has been very little communication research devoted solely to intimacy motives and dyadic love relationships.

In order to understand the concept of relational cohesiveness as it pertains to social and personal relationships, we must first examine various theories behind relational development, of which a prominent one is social penetration theory. According to Altman & Taylor (1973), social penetration theory is defined as a system that “. . . views each person’s personality as a series of multidimensional layers (like an onion skin) ranging from public accessible levels through semiprivate levels to private–personal core levels” (depth) (Vanlear, 1987, p. 300). See figure 1.

Relationship development is characterized by incremental reciprocal increase in ‘breadth and depth’ of self-disclosure and, therefore, penetration into each person’s

personality” (Vanlear, 1987, p. 300). Social Penetration theory lays out four fundamental keys that help explain formation of relationships:

- (a) “peripheral things are exchanged more often than and sooner than private information”; (b) “self-disclosure is reciprocal especially in the early parts of relational development. It “predicts . . . a give-and-take exchange in which each party is sharing deeper levels of feeling with each other” (c) “penetration is rapid at first then slows down. Most relationships stall before a stable exchange is established. When it (sharing of positive and negative reactions) is achieved, relationships become more important to both parties, more meaningful, and more enduring” (d) if depenetration occurs then the relationship will began to deteriorate. (Griffin, 2000, p.129)

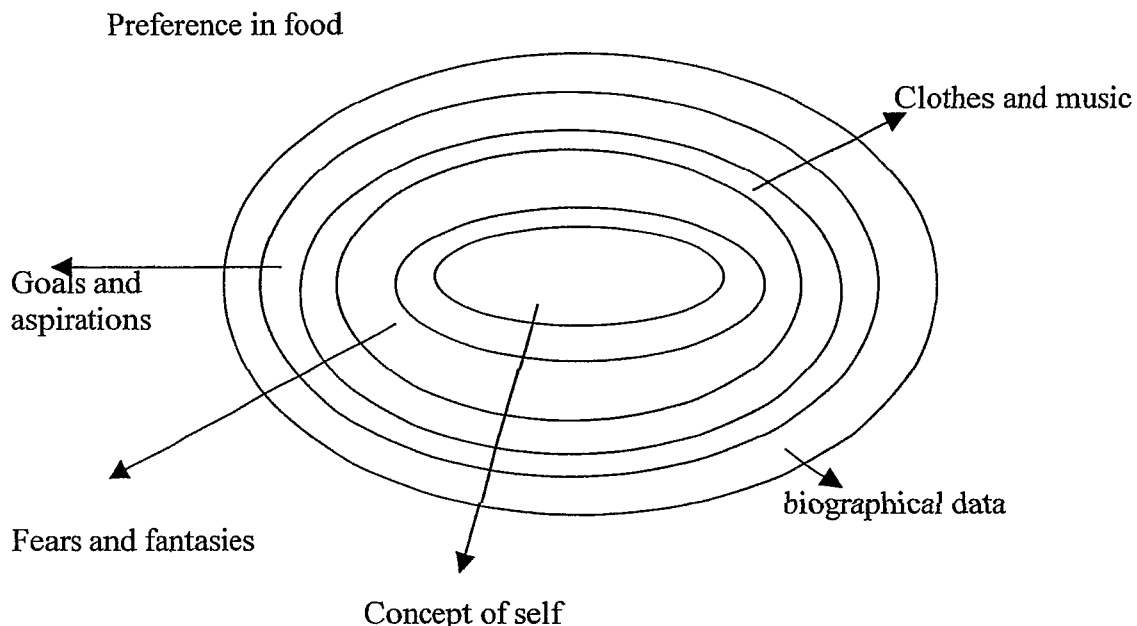


Figure 1 Paraphrase of Pete's Personality Structure  
(Griffin, 2000, p. 128)

In addition, social penetration theory focuses on a numerical system of costs and rewards. Relational success is defined by maximizing the benefits and minimizing the costs. This is achieved through a comparison level or threshold above which an outcome seems attractive. There is also a comparison level of alternatives (or  $CL_{alt}$ ) which represents a better choice available outside of the current relationship. The values of  $CL$ ,

and CL<sub>alt</sub> will determine if a person is willing to take the relationship further (Griffin, 2000, p.133). Therefore, the degree of penetration directly reflects the degree of intimacy in the relationship (Griffin, 2000, p.128).

Within the realm of relationships, social science scholars from various disciplines noted that ordinary language plays a vital part in constructing, maintaining, and redefining relationships. Further and more specifically, certain words or phrases carry unique meaning, such as idioms, metaphors and other expressions, which, although common in language, have been for the most part ignored in personal relationships (Swinney & Cutler, 1979, p. 523). Idioms in particular present a challenge to those researchers who seek to build one concrete model by which idioms in general can be understood, processed or analyzed.

In the context of personal relationships how do participants come to understand what idioms are and what they mean? How do they recognize an idiom when they see one? To answer these questions, we first need to define idioms and look at them from a theoretical perspective. According to Sweeney and Cutler (1979), an idiom is defined as a “string of two or more words for which meaning is not derived from the meaning of the individual words comprising that string” (523).

Due to the complex nature of idioms, the literature dealing with idioms has only appeared since the turn of the century. Surprisingly, many linguists have steered away from studying idioms completely because of the disdain for their vagueness (Makkai, 1972, p. 26). However, idiomacity or the task of defining what constitutes an idiom or idiomatic expression is still, at best, controversial because there has been no effort to discern the internal makeup of idioms. More important is the dilemma that involves identifying the properties which will capture all idioms, and exclude “non-idioms”

(Fernando & Flavell, 1981, p. 18). While a number of theories have been presented, two major approaches have emerged. Under the first approach, idioms are treated as “unique and different from ordinary language processes” (Cacciari & Glucksberg, 1991, p. 217). The second approach “treats idioms as continuous with ordinary forms of language” (Cacciari & Glucksberg, 1991, p. 217). This opposing dichotomy in perspective has plagued many scholars and has posed some interesting problems for “standard theories of language” (Cacciari & Glucksberg 1991, p. 217). Before I examine the research related to these major idiom theories, I will briefly review the structural properties of idioms and discuss several types of idioms.

The volume of “linguistic literature” relating to idioms is small when compared with that of literature about rhetoric, grammar or metaphors (Fernando & Flavell, 1981, p. 1). In 1958, Charles F. Hockett, a modern theoretician, became the first linguist to examine the “idiom in the light of modern linguistic theory” (Fernando & Flavell, 1981, p.4). Hockett postulated that in everyday communication speakers-hearers continually produce and interpret novel utterances. “The raw materials from which we build utterances are idioms”(Fernando & Flavell, 1981, p. 5). According to Hockett, context becomes a crucial ingredient and causes the “speaker /hearer to identify and interpret expression as being idiomatic or not” (Fernando & Flavell, 1981, p. 6). Therefore, Hockett, one of several scholars, defined idioms in terms of five structural properties:

- 1) the meaning of an idiom is not the result of the compositional function of its constituents (or parts)
- 2) an idiom is a unit that either has a homonymous literal counterpart or at least individual constituents that are literal though the expression as a whole would not be interpreted literally
- 3) idioms are transformationally deficient in one way or another
- 4) idioms constitute set expressions in a given language and
- 5) idioms are institutionalized. (Fernando & Flavell, 1981, p. 17)



The *first characteristic of idioms concerning its structure of meaning* is expressed in terms of its noncompositionality or opacity. Basically speaking the meaning of an idiom cannot be achieved from the total of the meaning of its individual parts. This means that no part of an idiom carries independent meaning (Brinton & Akimoto, 1999, p. 7). In addition, this means that idiomatic expressions are not predictable. Using the example of *kick the bucket*, the meaning “to die” cannot be deduced from the sum of the words kick + the + bucket. Therefore, the meaning cannot be retrieved. However, closer examination of a variety of idioms demonstrates that not all idioms are noncompositional(not analyzable). Some expressions (e.g. *pop the question*) are almost completely compositional, while other phrases are not (Gibbs, 1995, p.100). Due to the debate over the compositionality of idioms, a number of scholars have come to the conclusion that idioms can be recognized in a continuum fashion from flexible to irregular semantically from transparent to opaque and from unrestricted to restricted in fixedness (Brinton & Akimoto, 1999, p. 8).

Charles Hockett (1958) extended his treatment of idioms and as such it includes material that belong in two groups: lexemes and sememes. Lexemes are the smallest “semantically irreducible unit” and are expressed in the form of words or expressions (e.g. “cat”, “man drop a brick”, “pass the buck” etc.)(Fernando & Flavell, 1981, p. 22). Sememes are similar to morphemes which are also one of the smallest meaningful unit (e.g “do” in “undo” or “er” in “doer” etc.) From these concepts he goes on further to outline six types of idioms: 1) substitutes; 2) proper names; 3) abbreviations; 4)English phrasal compounds; 5) figures of speech; and 6) slang.

The first type of idiom Hockett (1958) called “substitutes” consists of pronouns like *he*, *she* or *it*. These pronouns are considered lexemes and are considered to be a

different idiom in that it refers to a different person. For example, just the same way a person can be referred to as *I* when he refers to himself, he/she can be referred to as *you* when someone else refers to him/her (Makkai, 1972, p. 34).

The second type of idiom consists of proper names such as naming people and places. This type is considered idiomatic because they are morphemes and their “meaning is unpredictable”, and because each time they refer to someone else (Makkai, 1972, p. 35). Although proper name idioms are considered to be basic sememes, they are understood, and there is no need to dwell on their unpredictability. For example when you say ‘*Robert is a nice name and so is Elizabeth*’ it is typically understood as a lexeme.

The third type of idiom are abbreviations, or parts of quotes which bring to mind the rest of the quote. For example in “*you take the red cloth and I’ll take the yellow*”, yellow stands for yellow cloth even though cloth is omitted. In this example yellow is idiomatic and is only referring to the yellow cloth. However, an interpretive problem may come into play because the expression may not be entirely understood.

The fourth type of idiom relates to English phrasal compounds. Phrases such as *The White House* are quite different from *a white house* and point out a stress mark which indicates idiomaticity (Makkai, 1972, p. 37). However, again we run into potential interpretive problems because the stress mark may not bring out a meaning of the compound. The fifth type of idiom pertains to figures of speech much like similes and metaphors. The sixth type of idiom relates to slang, which includes words like *vamoose*, *beat it*, *blow it!*.

While Hockett’s treatment of the idiom types is useful, the problem is that the idiom became a “catch all” because it included everything from phrases and pronouns to whole sentences (Makkai, 1972, p. 33). In essence Hockett failed to “distinguish formally

formally and systemically between these strata or strata systems” (Makkai, 1972, p. 33). As a result, there became a need to have a more “structural theory of language” which would expound upon idioms more accurately (Makkai, 1972, p. 33).

One of the earliest theories surrounding idioms in psycholinguistic research is the Idiom List Hypothesis. According to this theory proposed by Bobrow and Bell (1973) idioms (complex expressions) are accessed from a mental “idiom word dictionary” (p. 343). When he/she encounters an idiom, he/she searches this list for a literal meaning. If a literal meaning cannot be found then the idiom takes on an intended meaning. Bobrow and Bell’s (1973) findings revealed that people understand idioms faster than “when they do not know what kinds of expressions to expect” (Glucksberg, 2001, p. 76). In addition, this theory supposes that idioms are noncompositional in nature and have meanings that can be retrieved from memory (Glucksberg, 2001, p. 76).

The problem with this theory is that it is too general. While it applies to idioms that are opaque in nature, it also applies to other fixed idioms including proper names, place names, brand names and exclamations (Glucksberg, 2001, p. 76). In addition, research conducted by Swinney & Cutler (1979) indicates that familiar idioms “are understood as quickly or quicker” in their “idiomatic sense” than in the “literal sense”(Cacciari & Glucksberg, 1991, p. 218).

The second theory which also has a psycholinguistic foundation is the Lexical Representation Hypothesis or Lexicalization Hypothesis (Swinney & Cutler, 1979). According to Swinney & Cutler (1979), idioms are stored as “single lexical items” and when one encounters an idiom, “access of the lexicalized meaning of an idiom takes place simultaneously with the access of the literal meaning of the individual words” (Van de Voort & Vonk, 1995, p. 283). This means that when one encounters an idiom

both the literal and the idiomatic meaning take place simultaneously. However, relative speed of linguistic processing allows for faster idiom access because it does not require the processing (lexical, syntactic and semantic) involved in “full linguistic analysis” (Glucksberg, 2001, p. 77). Therefore, this theory also predicts that figurative or idiomatic meaning is available before the literal meaning is even computed.

The problem, as this theory implicates is that any change in word order will make the idiom unrecognizable (Van de Voort & Vonk, 1995, p. 283). As a result, it will be impossible to access the lexicalized or idiomatic meaning. Another major problem with the Lexicalization Hypothesis is that many times idioms behave much like ordinary phrases and may “undergo syntactic operations” of tense marking. For example using the string *kick the bucket*, one may kick the bucket now or kick the bucket tomorrow. Therefore, if the word *kick* is merely a word then, the element *kick* will not be syntactically productive (Cacciari & Glucksberg, 1991, p. 219). This idea of syntactical flexibility of some idioms and not others will, in effect, lead to the rejection of the Lexicalization Hypothesis as a model of idiom comprehension.

The third theory, Direct Access Hypothesis by Gibbs (1980) argues that “people bypass literal meanings entirely” and arrive at the most familiar, idiomatic meaning first (Cacciari & Glucksberg, 1991, p.219). This hypothesis also confirms the idea that familiar idioms are recognized more easily than others and thus facilitate idiomatic meaning. However, this theory poses similar problems with those of Swinney & Cutler (1979) in that if people bypass literal meanings some mechanism for accessing idiomatic meaning vs literal meaning must be required. In addition, the Direct Access Hypothesis does not account for the fact that “different patterns of words can yield the same idiomatic meanings” (Cacciari & Glucksberg, 1991, p.219). In addition, other research

by Stroop (1935) demonstrated that even when words have more than one meaning, people cannot ignore the (literal) meaning of words even when asked to do so.

Therefore, the idea that people can somehow suppress or bypass the literal meaning of idioms entirely (no matter how conventional) for idiomatic meaning is false.

The problems with traditional theories of language as applied to idioms, like those reviewed above, are many. The central problem with these traditional approaches comes from the underlying assumptions concerning idioms as being “distinct from ordinary literal language” (Gibbs, 1995, p. 98). These assumptions include the idea that the noncompositional nature of idioms accounts for the why idioms are syntactically and lexically limited. Basically one cannot transform the phrase *John kicked the bucket* to *the bucket was kicked by John* without distorting the nonliteral or idiomatic meaning. The assumption that idioms are noncompositional explains why idioms are lexically frozen. In addition, it explains why you cannot substitute *kick the bucket* for *kick the pail* (Gibbs, 1995, p. 98). All of these explanations point to the tendency of traditional linguistics research to draw “false generalizations” from the analysis of a single example (i.e. *kick the bucket*). Even though some phrases like *kick the bucket* demonstrate the more traditional claims about idioms, it does serve as a good representation of the idioms that exist in American English (Gibbs, 1995, p. 99).

Contrary to traditional linguistic theory, evidence from other linguistic research shows that idioms are compositional or analyzable at least to some extent. That means that the idiom has individual parts which “independently contribute to what these phrases figuratively mean as wholes” (Gibbs, 1995, p. 100). The two hypotheses which support this idea are the Configuration Hypothesis and the Decompositional Hypothesis.

According to the Configuration Hypothesis by Cacciari and Tabossi (1988) the overall meaning of the idiom comes or is activated as soon as there is sufficient input in order to recognize it as an idiom. In this model, key words that are part of the idiomatic expression become important in detecting the general meaning of the entire idiomatic phrase. When the final key word is accessed then and only then can the idiom be recognized. Before the final key is accessed the idiom is processed literally (Van de Voort & Vonk, 1995, p. 284). The Configuration Hypothesis in essence treats idioms as no different from any other familiar string of words. However, as with all familiar word sequences (e.g. poetry, songs) these configurations are driven by context. Thus the meaning of individual words can play an important role in discourse (Cacciari & Glucksberg, 1991, p.221).

The second theory is the Decomposition Hypothesis by Gibbs and Nayak (1989), which states that idioms can vary in their degree of compositionality. According to this theory, words used as idioms contribute to the overall figurative meaning of the phrase. As people try to analyze an idiomatic expression, they analyze them much the same way they analyze literal expressions. Independent idiomatic meaning is assigned to the individual parts which are then combined to form the overall “figurative interpretation of the phrase” (Van de Voort & Vonk, 1995, p. 284). In addition meaning access is dependent upon the degree of compositionality of the idiom. According to Gibbs & Nayak (1989), there are three classes of compositionality: normal decompositional idioms like (e.g. pop the question); abnormally decomposable idioms (e.g. carry a torch for someone); and nondecomposable idioms. As decomposable idioms are processed some meaning is obtained literally or figuratively. This happens because the parts of the idiom have independent meanings. With noncompositional idioms, the individual parts

do not carry meaning, and thus the analysis fails and the “stipulated” meaning is accessed from the mental lexicon (Van de Voort & Vonk, 1995, p. 285).

Taking into account the many theories that seek to explain how idioms attribute meaning only demonstrate that there is not one theory that completely explains idiom comprehension. In an extensive study conducted by Gibbs and his colleagues, it was sought to determine how idioms are classified and whether compositional idioms are easier to understand than noncompositional ones. From this extensive study Gibbs along with Cacciari and Glucksberg (1991); Gibbs and Nayak (1989); Gibbs, Nayak & Cutting (1989); Gibbs, Nayak, Bolton and Keppel (1989) proposed a functional classification of idioms that divides idioms into four types: noncompositional; compositional opaque; compositional transparent; and quasi-metaphorical (see figure 2). In addition, they found that compositional idioms were more easy to identify than noncompositional ones (Glucksberg, 2001, p. 74).

As these different theories suggest, the process of idiom comprehension is not fully understood. The fact that idioms can vary from opaque to transparent and from noncompositional to compositional demonstrates that idioms may exist in many forms. However, there is no doubt that all of these theories play a vital part in the understanding of how idioms are processed. In culture, learners must fully understand the meaning of idioms in order to “tap deeply into the world that accompanies language” (Glucksberg, 2001, p. 87). In the same way that learning the idioms of a language involves “acculturation to that community”, even more so subcultures also develop their own “private language” (Glucksberg, 2001, p. 88). In their unique world, expressions including jargon, slang and idioms serve to reinforce “social cohesion” between individual families and family members (Glucksberg, 2001, p. 88). These examples

show that in many ways idioms are not simply words but a way to communicate our everyday concepts of love and friendship and marriage.

Noncompositional Opaque (NO)	Compositional Opaque (CO)
Compositional Transparent (CT)	Quasi-Metaphorical (Q)

Figure 2 Functional Typology of Idioms  
(Glucksberg, 2001, p. 17)

Communication in marriage and similar intimate relationships continues to be an important and interesting topic of study. Words and expressions used between spouses provide a glimpse into the symbolic world of the marital dyad. Over the years, the marital dyad has also been of great interest to researchers in part because of a need to understand how it functions. Included in this early work was a need to find an adequate measure that would assess the relational quality of nonmarital dyads. A landmark study entitled “Measuring Dyadic Adjustment: New Scales for Assessing the Quality of Marriage and Similar Dyads” by Graham Spanier (1976) focused on developing a valid and reliable scale to measure dyadic adjustment. The study examined dyadic adjustment as a process but from a given point in time on a continuum and focused on the characteristics and interactions of the dyad relationship. The Dyadic Adjustment Scale consisted of 32 items and was composed of four subscales: dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion and affectional expression. The Dyadic Adjustment Scale proved to be effective because it could be completed in a short amount of time, could be



used as a self administered instrument, and would allow researchers to use parts or subscales without losing any reliability (Spanier, 1976, p. 22). See Appendix E.

Spanier's (1976) study was important for several reasons. It launched the idea that dyadic adjustment is and continues to be a significant outcome of marital interaction. Secondly, Spanier's study established the importance of dyadic adjustment as a key factor in studying the quality of dyads by developing a valid and reliable measure. By assessing various measures of dyadic adjustment Spanier's study was very comprehensive in its attempt to find the most reliable indicators of adjustment and satisfaction.

Another key ingredient in the study of marital dyads is marital satisfaction. Marital satisfaction is an aspect of personal relationships that allows us to tap into the contentment within marital relationships. More importantly, it refers to the way a husband and wife "describe and evaluate the quality of their marriage" (Fitzpatrick, 1988, p.32). According to Burgess and Locke (1945) "satisfaction appears to be a correspondence between the actual and the expected or a comparison of the actual relationship with the alternative, if the present relationship were terminated" (Rollins & Feldman, 1970, p. 20). However many scholars still debate the best way to measure this most vital concept (Fitzpatrick, 1988, p. 38). In fact, one study conducted by Rollins & Cannon (1974) revealed much of the research on marital satisfaction to be inconsistent. While several studies reveal a general decline of marital satisfaction over the life span of the family, other studies (Bernard, 1934; Bradburn & Coplovitz, 1965; Burr, 1970; Gurin, Verhoff & Feld, 1960; Terman, 1938;) reveal a general decline followed by an increase (Rollins & Cannon, 1974, p. 271).

Not surprisingly, most scholars agree that communication is strongly tied to

marital happiness (another term for marital satisfaction). These studies used a variety of techniques and different parts of the United States. The goal of Rollins and Cannon's (1974) study was to determine which of the studies conducted by Blood and Wolfe (1960) and Rollins and Feldman (1970) were inconsistent. Results from Rollins & Cannon's study revealed that the study conducted by Blood and Wolfe (1960) was inconsistent due to lack of validity. The study conducted by Rollins & Feldman (1970) revealed a u-shaped curve relationship (indicating a decline in early stages followed by an increase in later stages) consistent with earlier studies. However, these early works were later developed by such scholars as Fitzpatrick (1988) and Gottman (1994).

Rollins and Feldman's (1970) study was important because it confirmed developmental changes of marital satisfaction in the family over time. It also revealed that the meaning of marriage for men and women are influenced by different factors within the family itself. Rollins and Feldman's study does suggest a relationship between the way it functions to build relational cohesiveness (Hopper, et al., 1981). In an role strain and marital satisfaction. From Rollins and Feldman's (1970) study we can see the importance of parental roles and how occupational pressure can impact the marital relationship. However, these external influences are not pertinent to the communication that takes place within the marital dyad itself as it relates to satisfaction.

Marital satisfaction has been explored by researchers in past research because of the way it functions to build relational cohesiveness (Hoper et al., 1981). In an initial study focusing on the pragmatics or communication use of idioms, Hopper et al., (1981) explored idioms in intimate relationships, suggesting that there are "unique or idiosyncratic manifestations" that occur in intimate talk (Hopper et al., 1981, p. 24). These idiosyncrasies consist of private expressions (or jargon) that set couples apart

from others. Use of idiomatic speech creates specialized meanings and reinforces the couple's own unique and personal identity. Idioms are likely to occur most frequently among romantic couples during a period when relationship commitment needs to be emphasized (Hopper et al., 1981, p. 24). Results from Hopper et al., (1981) identified 545 idiomatic expressions that were analyzed into eight categories:

- (a) "affection", which expressed love or complimented a partner; teasing insults, which combines "playfulness and derogation" in order to communicate unacceptable behavior to a partner; (b) "partner nicknames", which include terms of address for a partner; (c) "names for others", which are names used for other people outside of the relationship; (d) "requests and routines", which deals with a couple communicating something indirectly in front of others; (e) "confrontations", which involve criticizing a partner but without playing or teasing; (f) "sexual invitations", which are ways in which a couple proposes sex and; (g) "sexual references and euphemisms", which refer to names for male and female genitals as well as sexual intercourse. (Hopper et al., 1981, pp. 25-26)

Further Hopper et al., reported that men preferred idioms thought to signify power or action, while women preferred idioms related to romance (Hopper et al., 1981, p. 24). Hopper et al. (1981) study of married couples also confirmed that both partners used idioms over half the time. This study was useful because it suggested that use of idioms potentially favored an increase in closeness in a relationship. In addition, this study showed that idioms are adaptable to private or public circumstances. This study also reported that over the course of relationships, personal idioms may change or may cease. However, this study only focused on exploring the initial stage of idiom use of the relationship and could have a stronger impact if it focused on long term relationships.

A second study entitled "Did You Bring the Yarmulke for the Cabbage Patch Kid?" by Bell, Buerkel-Rothfuss and Gore (1987) focused on the use of idiomatic expression among unmarried couples. This study examined idioms as a specific type of relationship symbol, and how it functioned in the context it was used. Researchers used

Rubin's liking and loving scale (1970) and Maxwell's (1985) close relationship questionnaire, to measure feelings of closeness and caring for each other in the relationship. Results from Bell et al., (1987) study confirmed that intimates' feelings of commitment, closeness and love toward their partner are reflected in the idioms they use during interaction. However, this study also revealed that most idioms were used in public more so than private settings. Using idioms in public may be fostered by the couple's need to project a "undivided social identity"(Bell et al., 1987, p. 63). This becomes important because a couple's need to use idioms in the presence of others allows others to presume that the pair has a "special relationship" (Bell et al., 1987, p. 63). Bell et al., (1987) study focused on newly romantic couples, however, we need data about different types of relationships and how idioms used may enhance relational satisfaction.

A third study conducted by Bell and Healey (1992) focused on the system of idiomatic communication and gender differences in friendships. This study used idioms as a specific type of relationship code and how it functioned in the relationship. Data revealed thirteen categories of idioms. Seven of the eight idioms were used in a previous study conducted by Hopper et al. (1981). However, five new categories of idioms emerged pertaining to activities, emotions, greetings and good-byes. Results from this study concluded that idioms are also prevalent in friendships. In addition, idioms emerged in friendships only after they have achieved a strong sense of solidarity. Females were more likely to use affection idioms because they based their friendships on sharing, disclosure and emotional closeness. This study was useful, but only reported data from one person in the friendship and therefore was lacking supportive data due to geographical distance. This study was also limited in its ability to draw conclusions

among gender differences. Although it focused on friendships, the study could have been more helpful if it had a better random sample of participants and focused more on idiom development and/or idiom frequency.

A more recent study entitled “ ‘Sweet Pea’ and ‘Pussy Cat’: An Examination of Idiom Use and Marital Satisfaction Over the Life Cycle,” Breuss and Pearson (1993) is most closely related to the study reported in this thesis. Breuss and Pearson (1993) presented a study, which expanded on previous studies and focused on couples’ use of idioms over time. Using Graham Spanier’s 10 Item Marital Satisfaction subscale, (which is part of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale) (See Appendix C) one hundred and fifty four couples were used. The participants were also asked to fill out the idiom report similar to the one used by Bell et al. (1987). The study consisted of couples throughout various stages of relationship cycles: (a) stage 1 young couples married up to 5 years; (b) Childbearing couples who were expecting a child or had children from ages 1 year to 5 years of age; (c) mid life couples who had children from ages 6 to 18 years of age; and (d) Empty nest couples who had no children at home. Results overall showed a positive correlation between marital satisfaction in stage one couples and their use of idioms. In addition, stage one couples without children used idioms more often than couples in any other stage. However, results did reveal similar correlations of satisfaction and idiom use among stage three couples with school age children. These results reveal that the number of idioms used may generally decrease over time. This decrease may indicate that idioms are taken for granted and are not as vital in later stages of the relationship. This study was needed because it bridged the gap between previous research and expanded on a long term level. This study was also very important because it was the only study to

identify a correlation between marital satisfaction and idiomatic use (Breuss & Pearson, 1993, p. 611).

The research above is relevant to the study reported here because it lays part of the foundation of relational culture upon which to relate intimate dyads. The studies are relevant because they allow us to see that idiomatic expressions are a part of a system of codes that exist in friendships and intimate relationships. In addition, these studies also illustrate that they are most vital in initial stages of these relationships as they facilitate intimacy and bonding and love. One particular study concluded that idiomatic expressions decrease over time, indicating that idioms may change. Therefore, it can be concluded that idiomatic expressions are important to the fabric of relationships (Breuss & Pearson, 1993, p. 614).

#### Rationale For Research Questions and Hypotheses

The study of idiomatic expressions is important to interpersonal communication because it gives us insight into the private communication that takes place in interpersonal relationships and private communication is thought to play a significant role in the creation of "a 'culture of two' (Breuss et al., 1993, p. 609) (see figure 2.) This becomes especially vital in the arena of intimate dyads such as marriage where two people construct their own personalized system of symbols and meanings.

Marital relationships (heterosexual) were chosen for the focus of this study, rather than other kinds of personal relationships because they are a prevalent family form studied, that has been used throughout the communication literature (Anderson, Russell and Schumm, 1983; Oring, 1984; Rubin, 1970). This is in part due to current societal focus on creating "domestic partnerships." Domestic partnerships relate to the family and home particularly, in heterosexual contexts. Although new forms of long-

term adult intimate *familial* relationships are beginning to attract the attention of the press and researchers, statistically marital relationships are still a large percentage of the population.

According to current U. S. census data 58.6% of adults are married, which accounts for over 6 million people (U. S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstracts of the U.S., 2003, p. 13). Although nonmarital family relationships are important in order to add a more complete picture of communication in adult relationships, they need to be examined in future studies. However, this investigator has opted to limit this study to the marital context.

Frequency of use of idioms plays an important role because of the way it affects role expectations and need for approval. The frequency in which idioms are given and received may also affect the overall impression of marital success psychologically and emotionally because the way partners perceive one another may be different. The question of whether a relationship exists between the frequency of idioms used by a spouse and his/her ratings of marital satisfaction is also key as it relates idiosyncratic language to his/her own perceptions of marital success. In addition, the frequency of idioms received from a spouse gives us some indication of the reciprocal interaction patterns within close relationships. Age may also come into play as our personalities change because it may reflect relationship consistency. Therefore, if idiomatic expressions play a role in marital relationships it is likely that they would also affect marital satisfaction. The hypotheses and research questions for this thesis are as follows:

H<sub>1</sub> There is a positive relationship between frequency of idiom use and marital satisfaction for newlywed couples.

H<sub>2</sub> The amount and types of idioms used by husbands/wives will be significantly different during the different three stages of the family life cycle.

H<sub>3</sub> Husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction is positively correlated with the total number of recalled idioms across the family life cycle.

RQ<sub>1</sub> Is there a relationship between the frequency of idioms a spouse speaks to his/her spouse and that spouses' own ratings of marital satisfaction?

RQ<sub>2</sub> Is there a relationship between the frequency of idioms a spouse receives from his/her spouse and his/her ratings of marital satisfaction?

RQ<sub>3</sub> Is there a relationship between the amount of the kinds of idioms (spouse-focused or relationship focused) present in marital communication and marital satisfaction across the family life span?

RQ<sub>4</sub> Do spouses' reports of the frequency of idioms use affect ratings of marital satisfaction differently for husbands and wives?

RQ<sub>5</sub> Do husbands and wives use fewer idioms as they get older?



## SECTION III

### METHOD

#### Participants

Sixty married couples participated in the study for a total of one hundred twenty individual participants. Participants were recruited from communication courses and from the surrounding church and local community. The result was a nonrandom convenience sample. The participants were recruited and asked to volunteer as a way to help fulfill degree requirements and earn extra points toward a future assignment. Participants were in one of three categories: (a) newly married less than three years with no children; (b) married more than three years with school aged children; and (c) empty nest couple with no children (living at home). Each group contained at least twenty couples.

#### Design

The design for this proposed study was a cross sectional survey study. A crosssectional survey allows the researcher to examine participants at one point in time versus over a long time period. A survey study was used because it was the most feasible, economical and efficient way to gather data from participants within an allotted time frame. In addition, a survey is a consistent method of data collection that would ensure anonymity of the participants and can be filled out within a short period of time. Research anonymity is very crucial as it protects the rights of the participants so that any confidential information or information of a sensitive nature supplied to the researcher cannot be identified or matched with any participant. In a study that explores intimate communication patterns a guarantee of anonymity further ensures that respondents have no reason to fear disclosure. In addition, it also protects the researcher

against possible legal implications due to misuse of personal data. The fact that many variables can be measured at once also adds to its efficiency. As a method of data collection, surveys are one of many preferred methods by social scientists because they allow access to a sample of a population group for the purposes of identifying and making assertions about the total population from which the sample was taken.

However, there also exists a great amount of literature on the pitfalls of conducting survey research. According to Earl Babbie (1999), one weakness of surveys is that standardized questionnaire items frequently represent the “least common denominator” when it comes to evaluating people’s attitudes and perceptions (251). This basically means that in designing questions that are minimally appropriate for everyone, you fail to discover what is appropriate for most. Another drawback is nonresponsive respondents or participants who may refuse to answer questions appropriately and cannot be contacted, which may distort the sample. Survey error also comes into play when questions are confusing or create bias. Questions may be uninterpretable or muddy, and as a result participants become “floaters” and choose an answer when they really don’t know (Schutt, 2001, p. 218). To adjust for this, this study consisted of short, concise questions that could be answered with relative ease. Othertimes questions may be loaded and certain responses may look more attractive than others.

Amongst the various ways in which to gather and collect interpersonal data are survey, experiment, textual analysis or ethnography. This study sought to address perceptions and interpersonal messages. Thus, the means available to collect such data were survey based in order to obtain both quantitative and descriptive information. Alternative choices, such as ethnography mentioned above were not appealing to me and could not provide this type of information and would require more time. Descriptive

information includes detailed accounts or an idiom report like the one used for this study.(see Appendix C part III). Due to fact that one method of inquiry is restrictive in nature, I used a multi-method design of questionnaire and idiom self report, which proved to be more advantageous than just using the survey alone. However, despite the disadvantages, survey research is still a frequently used method and accounts for more than one-third of published research in communication (Schutt, 2001, p. 209). As such, surveys have become a vital entity of our society and without this method of data collection, we cannot possibly determine the value, of a large portion, of what we read or see in newspapers or television (Schutt, 2001, p. 209).

The only problem that I anticipated was the inability to obtain a high response rate. However the process of sampling can be arduous because of the various types which include quota sampling, purposive sampling, convenience sampling, and snowball sampling (Schutt, 2001, p. 220). Quota sampling is not a relevant strategy here given that the study is designed to generate future research questions rather than validate theory and, to an extent this study's sample is purposive as particular kinds of married couples are featured. Snowball sampling or network is obtained through word of mouth. All of these choices, while not random, may not produce the right kind of people for the study. Even taking into consideration that convenient sampling may result in a sample with lowered external validity, given this study's purpose, available time, and no funding, I chose to use it because it would allow me to get my participants more quickly.

#### Human Subjects Review

In order to proceed with the study, written permission had to sought from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The purpose of the IRB is to ensure that the study did not pose any harm or danger to participants. The application was signed by the

Chairman of my Thesis Committee and reviewed by the members of the College of Arts and Letters. Approval was given (see Appendix F) and surveys were distributed.

### Procedures

First I obtained permission from the professor teaching the Children and Communication course and the Research Methods course at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. I introduced myself as a graduate researcher to establish credibility. The participants were advised that they were to find one couple that was in one of the groups listed above. In addition, they were notified of their rights and were informed that the survey must be filled out completely. Using Graham Spanier's marital satisfaction subscale (see appendix C), participants were asked to fill out a ten item survey. Each couple was given one idiom report and two (2) copies of the Marital Satisfaction Subscale survey. The couples were asked to fill out part one, which contained the marital satisfaction subscale, and part two, which contained demographic information separately.

Part three was to be filled out together. Each couple was told that the survey would take approximately 5-8 minutes and must be completely filled out for accuracy purposes. After asking about any additional questions, I began to hand out the packets.

Several couples from two local predominately African-American Pentecostal churches were also used. I also used several couples from the local community in the Hampton, Virginia area. I explained that I needed help with a school project and they offered their help on a volunteer basis.

Upon receipt of the material packet, the couple filled out the Marital Satisfaction Subscale separately. Once they were finished completing the Marital Satisfaction Subscale, participants' filled in demographic information, including how many years

they have been married, *if they have children from present and past relationships*, and their ages. After the definition of an idiom was explained, they were given examples of an idiom type and were asked to describe personal idioms used within their relationship, what the idiom means, how often the idiom was used, and by which partner. The participants only identified recalled idioms over the course of the last few days. After filling out the survey couples were instructed to put the surveys into the corresponding envelopes provided and return them in a timely manner or at the following week at the appropriate class session. The participants were also informed that anonymity of their identities and that any confidential information they submitted would be kept confidential. Participants were also advised of their right to terminate participation at any time.

The surveys were consecutively numbered “h” for husband, “w” for wife and “c” for couple in the upper right corner along with a number so that each couple could return two separate surveys and one idiom report. For the participants in the communication courses, a half grade increase was negotiated with the instructor to serve as incentive for returning the survey.

### Materials

The research tool used to conduct this study is a questionnaire labeled ‘Marital Communication Study.’ The questionnaire included a subset scale from Graham Spanier’s Dyadic Adjustment Scale (1976) called the Marital Satisfaction Scale. The reason I chose the Marital Satisfaction Subscale is because it has been widely used by researchers and has proven to be an effective measure of satisfaction. This subscale can be used for married and/or cohabitating couples. The subjects chosen for this study were newlyweds, couples with kids and emptynest couples. I chose these three groups because

I needed to show the different dynamics across the life cycle.

The second instrument I used was a modified version of the idiom report used by Bell et al. (1987). I chose to use the idiom report because it has been a reliable measure to count idioms and it would be easier to categorize them. It would also be easier to gather information about the frequency with which these idioms are used by one or both spouses.

#### Independent Variable

The primary independent variable was couple type, which can be newlywed or couples with no children; couples with children and empty-nest or couples with no children living at home. This variable was operationalized by subjects indicating whether they have children and if so whether they are from a past or present relationship. The second independent variable is sex of the participants (male or female).

#### Dependent Variable

The dependent variable was marital satisfaction. This variable was measured using the Marital Communication Study Survey. Subjects were asked several questions about their relationship and asked to rate their relationship based upon their overall impression. Marital satisfaction is a useful type of dependent variable because we will be able to get a first hand honest opinion of how husband's and wives feel about their spouse and how they feel about their relationship. The other dependent variable is idiom use, which will be operationalized by using the Idiom Report. For each idiom listed subjects will indicate what the idiom means, how often the idiom is used and who uses the idiom. This variable seems reliable because the survey asks that both partners fill out this part together.

## SECTION IV

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data obtained from the participants who filled out the Marital Communication survey portion was analyzed by using SPSSX for Windows (Version 7.5) computer program system, specifically Pearson R correlation and ANOVA to analyze frequency of idiom use across different stages in the life cycle, couple type, age and satisfaction. In this thesis, the mean score for each group below will be calculated:

i) CTYPE with URAGE- the data analysis for this variable will indicate the mean age of newlyweds for men and women; mean age of couples with kids for men and women; and mean age of empty-nest couples for men and women.

ii) SATIS- This variable will provide a sum total of items three through nine in order to provide a rating of marital satisfaction.

iii) FREQ1, FREQ2, FREQ3, FREQ4, FREQ5, FREQ6, FREQ7, FREQ8 with SATIS- This analysis will allow us to see if there is a positive relationship between frequency of idiom use (often, sometimes, occasionally, rarely) and marital satisfaction. This analysis will answer the first main hypothesis of this study.

iv) IDIOM1, IDIOM2, IDIOM3, IDIOM4, IDIOM5, IDIOM6, IDIOM7, IDIOM7 with CTYPE with HUSREC with WIFEREC- This data analysis will allow us to see if the amount and types of idioms (nicknames, affection, names for others, requests, confrontations, sexual invitations, sexual references, teasing insults) recalled by husbands and wives will be different during different stages (newlyweds, with kids, emptynest). This analysis will answer the second main hypothesis of this study.

v) HUSREC with WIFEREC with SATIS with CTYPE- This analysis will determine if

husband's and wives' marital satisfaction (men and women scores) is positively correlated with the total number of recalled idioms by couple type (newlyweds, with kids, emptynest). This analysis will answer the third main hypothesis of this study.

vi) URAGE with HUSREC with WIFEREC- This analysis will tell us if husbands and wives use fewer idioms as they get older. This analysis will answer one of the research questions proposed in this study.

Hypothesis 1 pertained to newlyweds and the relationship between frequency of idioms and marital satisfaction. Hypothesis 3 focused on the correlation between the total number of recalled idioms across the family life cycle (newlywed, with kids and emptynest). Both were analyzed using Pearson R. Hypothesis 2 pertaining to amount and types of idioms used by husbands and wives across different stages was analyzed using ANOVA. There were also descriptive analyses done to calculate the mean and variance score for each group. In addition, SATIS mean scores (between groups) were calculated using a one way ANOVA F- test. The  $F$  test was used because of the need to examine differences in satisfaction among three groups. All statistical tests were conducted at the  $p < .05$  level. This is done to ensure that there is a 95% significance and confidence and the results which will be obtained is not due to chance. (See appendix D for codebook).

### Idiom Coding

The idioms were coded one by one by two persons and assessed by category type for consistency. Each person made a determination of what the idiom was, and what category it best applied to. Several idioms were unreadable. In addition, there were some idioms that fit into more than one category and so a determination could not be made. Interjudge agreement was 90% and those idioms that were disputable were placed into a separate category marked "other".



## SECTION V

### RESULTS

Of the 256 initial surveys distributed to married couples via communication courses and community church groups, 130 complete and usable surveys were returned for a total of 65 couples. Twenty-two were stage one couples, twenty-one were stage two couples, and twenty-two were stage three couples. Only four couples reported more than three years of marriage without children and were excluded from the analysis. In addition three couples submitted incomplete surveys and were also excluded from the analysis.

There were 299 idioms reported. Three couples reported fifteen or more idioms, two couples reported nine idioms; six couples reported seven idioms; three couples reported six idioms; twelve couples reported five idioms; eleven couples reported four idioms; seven couples reported three idioms; eleven couples reported two idioms; three couples reported one idiom. Only three couples reported no idioms.

Some of the partner nicknames reported were "tablespoon," "teaspoon," "hon," "babe," "darling," "fuzzball." Some examples of the affection type idioms reported were "sugar pie," "boobo bear," "sweetheart," "cuzikins." Some examples of sexual invitations were "sexy- woman," "hot stuff," "sexual chocolate." Some examples of confrontations were "fat head," "plastic lips." Some examples of labels for others were "jiggaboo" "shelly bop," "mookie." Some examples of teasing insults reported were "jelly butt," "applehead," "looney."

Certain items on the Marital Communication Study Survey had to be recoded. Items 3, 4, 8 were recoded so that the original scale was from zero to five, five being low

and zero being *high*. We used the *transform compute* command on SPSS and any response that was zero became a five (never). Any response that was marked one became a four (rarely) and any response marked two became a three (occasionally). Any response that was marked three became a two (more often than not), and any response marked four became a one (most of the time). In addition, the last six statements on the survey were marked from highest, 5 to lowest, 0. I was able to run a reliability analysis for marital happiness subscale used to measure marital satisfaction was being used reliably in my study (Cronbach's Alpha =.83).

### Descriptive Statistics

The mean age for newlywed wives was 24.85 and the mean age for newlywed husbands was 27.75. The variance for newlywed wives was 5.82 and 7.89 for husbands. The mean age for wives with kids was 36.05 and the mean for husbands was 36.67. The variance for wives was 8.41 and for husbands was 8.13. The mean age for emptynest wives was 50.26 and for emptynest husbands was 52.67. The variance for wives was 5.55 and 6.12 for husbands. For a complete list by couple type See Table 1.

Table 1.

Comparison of Mean Age by Couple Type

	Newlywed (f)	Newlywed (m)	With Kids (f)	With Kids (m)	Emptynest (f)	Emptynest (m)
N	21.00	21.00	21.00	21.00	23.00	23.00
Mean	24.85	27.75	36.05	36.67	50.26	52.67
St. Deviation	05.82	07.89	08.41	08.13	05.55	06.12

Mean satisfaction score (SATIS) for newlyweds was 37.88, for couples with children mean satisfaction score was 35.40, and for emptynest couples mean satisfaction score was 36.24. For a complete list by couple type See Table 2. There were no significant differences between couple type and satisfaction.

Table 2.

Mean Satisfaction Scores by Couple Type

Source	Mean	df	F	Sig
Satis Between Groups	66.803	2	02,169	00.118
Within Groups	30.794	127		

*Note:* df=degrees of freedom; F= ratio of variance; Sig=significance

This portion of the results section provides data that addresses the research questions and hypotheses which are: H<sub>1</sub> There is a positive relationship between frequency of idiom use and marital satisfaction for newlywed couples.

A Pearson correlation was calculated to test for a positive correlation frequency of idiom use and marital satisfaction for newlywed couples. Results showed that there was no significant relationship between the frequency of idiom use and marital satisfaction for newlywed couples see table 3. Therefore hypothesis 1 was not supported.

H<sub>2</sub> The amount and types of idioms used by husbands/wives will be significantly different during the different three stages of the family lifespan. For the second hypothesis, results revealed there was only one significant difference for sexual invitation idioms ( $F(2, 25) = 4.282, p=.025$ ) (see table 4) and no difference

for the other seven types. Therefore, this hypothesis was only partially supported, for sexual invitation, but not the rest.

Table 3.

Pearson Correlation Between Frequency of Idiom Use and Marital Satisfaction for Newlywed Couples

	Nickname	Affection	Label for others	Sexual reference	Sexual invitation	Teasing insult	requests	confrontation
Satis P	-.339	.104	.433	---	-.355	.250	---	---
Sig	.084	.722	.391		.314	.458		

--- = could not be computed because at least one of the variables was constant.

Table 4.

One Way ANOVA For Amount and Types of Idioms Across the Family Lifespan

Source	Mean	df	F	Sig
Between Subjects				
Partner Nicknames	0.092	2	0.232	0.794
Affection	0.653	2	1.775	0.181
Label for others	0.200	2	0.215	0.811
Sexual Reference	1.125	2	2.250	0.426
Sexual Invitation	1.586	2	4.282	0.025*
Teasing Insults	0.596	2	1.397	0.266
Requests	0.025	2	0.049	0.952
Confrontation	0.063	2	0.083	0.921

Table 4. Continued

Source	Mean	df	F	Sig
Within Subjects				
Partner Nicknames	0.398	66		
Affection	0.368	44		
Label for others	0.929	7		
Sexual Reference	0.500	1		
Sexual Invitation	0.370	25		
Teasing Insults	0.427	25		
Requests	0.507	7		
Confrontation	0.750	5		

*Note.* df=degrees of freedom; F= ratio of variance; Sig=significance ;  
 \*=Statistically Significant  $p < .05$

In addition, I conducted Post Hoc tests for sexual invitation types idioms across the family lifespan, using LSD method. Results showed that the couples with children had the highest mean of the three groups (newlyweds=4.40,  $sd=.516$ ; couples with children=4.86,  $sd=.378$ ; emptynest= 4.00,  $sd=.775$ ).

H<sub>3</sub> Husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction is positively correlated with the total number of recalled idioms across the family lifespan.

A Pearson correlation was calculated to examine the correlation if any, between husband and wives marital satisfaction and total number of recalled idioms. Results found no significance for husband recall (Husbrecall)  $r(59) = -.079$ ,  $p=.550$  or for wife recall (Wiferecall)  $r(59) = .010$ ,  $p=.942$ ). However, a significant correlation was found

between number of idioms recalled by emptynest wives and satisfaction ( $r(22) = .463$ ,  $p=.030$ ). Therefore, hypothesis three was also not supported for both husband and wives.

RQ<sub>1</sub> Is there a relationship between the frequency of idioms a spouse speaks to his/her spouse and that spouses' own ratings of marital satisfaction?

A Pearson correlation was run to determine if there was a relationship between frequency of idioms spoken to a spouse and that spouse's own rating of marital satisfaction. Results revealed that there was no significance between frequency of idioms spoken and the rating of marital satisfaction wives ( $r(59)=.087$ ,  $p=.511$ ; husbands ( $59$ )= $-.098$ ,  $p=.458$ ). Therefore this research question was also not supported.

RQ<sub>2</sub> Is there a relationship between the frequency of idioms a spouse receives from his/her spouse and his/her ratings of marital satisfaction?

I conducted a Pearson correlation in order to determine if there was a relationship between the frequency of idioms a spouse receives and his/her ratings of marital satisfaction. Results showed that there was no significance wives ( $r(59)=.087$ ,  $p=.511$ ; husbands  $r(59)=-.098$ ,  $p=.458$ ). Therefore this research question was answered, thus there does not seem to be a significant relationship between idiom frequency received and marital satisfaction.

RQ<sub>3</sub> Is there a relationship between the amount of the kinds of idioms spouse-focused or relationship focused present in marital communication and marital satisfaction across the family life span?

Results revealed that there was a negative relationship between the amount of spouse focused or relationship focused idioms (partner nickname) and marital satisfaction ( $r(69) = -.240$ ,  $p=.047$ ). Therefore, there are data to suggest that the kinds of

idioms used may affect marital satisfaction differently at different points in the marital life span.

RQ<sub>4</sub> Do spouses' reports of the frequency of idioms use affect ratings of marital satisfaction differently for husbands and wives?

A Pearson correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between spouses' reports of frequency of idiom use and its affect on marital satisfaction for husbands or wives. Results revealed that spouses' report of partner nickname idioms had a negative affect on marital satisfaction ( $r(69) = -.240, p=.047$ ). Therefore this research question was somewhat negatively supported for spouses reporting of nickname idioms and marital satisfaction.

RQ<sub>5</sub> Do husbands and wives use fewer idioms as they get older?

Pearson correlation was conducted to determine if women and men use less idioms as they get older. Correlations between idiom use and age for husbands were not statistically significant (nicknames  $r=.061, p=.658$ ; affection  $r=-.217, p=.108$ ; label for others  $r=.179, p=.183$ ; sexual ref.  $r=-.177, p=.192$ ; sexual inv.  $r=.074, p=.579$ ; teasing insult  $r=.061, p=.643$ ; request  $r=.025, p=.852$ ; confrontations  $r=-.095, p=.474$ ). ( $r(61) = .287, p=.025$ ). However, women used fewer idioms except for partner nicknames as they got older ( $r(61) = .287, p=.025$ ). There also was a moderate and positive relationship between husbands' use of teasing and confrontation type idioms and age ( $r(60) = .404, p=.001$ ). Therefore, research question five was partially supported for men and for women.

## SECTION VI

### DISCUSSION

The findings from this study suggest that contrary to previous research, idioms may play less of a role in the marital satisfaction, than first anticipated. Although the study and results themselves have various limitations (e.g. convenience sample) that also urge caution in their interpretation. First, the volunteer convenience sample used for this study was not random. Participants were chosen on the basis of their availability and convenience. A random sample would ensure that each individual has an equal probability of being selected. Thus enabling one to generalize findings to an entire population. In addition, the couples in this study were all “moderately happy” and therefore, due to low variability of marital happiness, it is difficult to determine from the results of this study whether idioms play a significant role in marital satisfaction (because the bandwidth of variance was small). This is only my self assessment of the data which found that most couples answered favorably when asked about the satisfaction and overall feelings about their marriage. I would imagine that most people would not answer otherwise if they have hope for the future of their marriage. Dyadic adjustment scores for this sample of spouses indicated that, by and large, the sample was moderately happy on average. Given this low variability of dyadic adjustment scale happiness scores, combined with the sample’s relatively higher happiness, does leave open for further study questions about the role of idiom use in couples scoring in the unhappy ranges of satisfaction scales. On the theory that idiom use may indicate closeness, we can speculate that unhappy couples might use them less or not at all.



Perhaps, if there were a significant number of unhappy couples, the data may have been more accurate in making a stronger correlation between idioms and marital satisfaction.

As far as the proposed hypotheses, the results do not seem to indicate a relationship between frequency of idiom use and marital satisfaction for newlywed couples. However, there was a significant correlation between number of idioms recalled by emptynest wives and satisfaction. This gendered dimension was an important finding from the survey research. One possible reason to explain this significant correlation might be due to changes in marital roles whereby adult roles focus more on marriage later in life (Gurin, Verhoff & Feld, 1960). For Example, WWII, baby boomers, and generation X may view idioms and their use differently. Although no empirical data yet exists to support this, data from this study suggest that this would be fertile ground for future inquiry.

When it comes to the amount and types of idioms used by couples across the life cycle, the couples with children had the highest mean for sexual invitation idioms. This might indicate that couples with children are using idioms not only as a source of cohesiveness, but as a private code from outsiders (e.g., their children). The last set of statistical analysis deals with the relationship between frequency of idioms that are spoken to a spouse and that spouses' own ratings of marital satisfaction. The type of idioms that would pertain to this research question involve affection, and nickname idiom types. Future research should examine these particular type of idioms in particular because they signify those types of idioms that would most likely enhance the other spouse's ratings of marital satisfaction. In addition, it would shed light on the receiving spouse's attitude in relation to how they close they felt the relationship was. In other words, if a spouse speaks more affection type idioms to his/her spouse, then it is more

likely that the receiving spouse will feel that the relationship is close or intimate and thus would have a higher rating of marital satisfaction. The results from the data do not indicate any kind of causal relationship between frequency of idioms spoken to the opposite spouse and his/her own ratings of marital satisfaction.

Although this study also did not find a significant relationship between idioms spoken to or received by spouses and marital satisfaction, the significant correlation between age and idiom use for wives suggests that women seem to use more partner nickname idioms than did younger ones. Among the common nicknames reported were “sweetie,” “honeylumps,” “sugarlumps.” This may indicate that women have a need for closeness and continue using idioms across their marital relationship. An alternative explanation may reside in the assumption that women are socialized to be nurturers and relationship-oriented. On the other hand, the data seemed to indicate that men use less idioms as they got older, which means men may be more goal oriented than women.

Although this study sought to examine the trends of idiom use across the life cycle of couple type, two hypotheses were not supported as was initially expected. Surprisingly, there was also no indication from these results that frequency of idiom use plays a role in marital satisfaction in three stages in the life cycle. However, there seemed to be a cross-sectional study among emptynest couples’ marital satisfaction and number of idioms recalled by the wife. One explanation for this trend could be explained by the fact that during later stages of marriage, roles change as older couples focus more on marriage and communication. This is also enhanced by the quality of life they experience by having the dynamic of children at home, as do the couples with children.

Overall marital satisfaction across the life cycle was very similar to previous studies (Rollins and Feldman, 1970) which reported a U shaped curve (a

decline in the early stages, followed by an increase in later stages). Results from this study also found that across the life cycle, there was a decrease in early stages followed by a slight increase. That means that previous studies about the trend of marital satisfaction have been confirmed.

On the other hand, survey research cannot totally embody what participants are thinking, acting or saying. They can only measure via self-reports of recalled or hypothetical action. While this survey study only focused on frequency use of idioms and findings cannot be generalized beyond this sample, such samples are common in published research. The goal of this type of research is to explore new ground and to extend previous work into new populations. Another study with a larger random sample would be beneficial to determine if any substantial gender differences exist among a better pool of applicants and if idioms play a more significant role in marital satisfaction. Overall, this study was ecologically valid and can only serve to further previous work in marriage research.

Taking the results into account, what we now know from this study is that frequency may not be useful as a predictor of marital satisfaction. Other aspects (e.g. intensity) may be more predictive of marital satisfaction. We also know that different cohort generations may orient to idioms differently. While for older generations of women idioms may serve a connective function, for younger generations, idioms such as sexual invitations may served as a boundary from which to exclude others such as children or other outsiders.

Since race was not a focus of prior research, it was not included as a factor in this study. However, its absence does not detract from what was found, but is a matter to be included in future inquiry.

When we review previous literature in regards to idioms, we can see that idioms have been vaguely addressed, but controversially discussed. The debate has been ongoing from those researchers who feel they are a continuous part of language to opposing researchers who feel that idioms are a separate entity unto themselves. What we do know is that because of the complex way in which idioms are accessed and comprehended, idioms have been misunderstood until recent years. From an extensive studies conducted, we now have a more functional typology of idioms based upon their degree of transparency and ability to be analyzed. This continuum leads us to believe that idioms exist in many forms. What makes them more interesting is the fact that they are interwoven with ethnic cultures that accompany language. Even within cultures are subcultures which create their own identities through private codes that consist of idioms. Such is the case with marital dyads. Research from Hopper et al. (1981) and others has shown that idioms help to promote cohesiveness and create the “culture of two.” While there is a plethora of research on marital relationships, there still seems to be a debate concerning what key elements (e.g. satisfaction, cohesion etc.) help us to better understand them. Although developmental theories about relationships are not new, additional questions have been raised about the exchange that takes place within personal relationships. One begs the question as to whether a theory like social penetration that examines cost, rewards and satisfaction, can really explain what happens in personal relationships. In evaluating theories like that social penetration theory, two things are clear. The first is that self disclosure functions to enhance intimacy and serves as a primary conductor through which individuals attribute meaning (Wood, 1997, p.238). Secondly, people want to maximize the cost and rewards in their relationships to make sure they are “getting a good deal” (Wood, 1997, p. 234). My study used social

penetration theory as a framework to illustrate the developmental structure of relationships in regards to disclosure. However, other theorists (e.g. Honeycutt, 1993; Wood & Duck, 1995; Duck & Silver, 1990) have disputed these ideas. One major criticism of earlier theories was the implication of linear progression of relationships. Relationships that were intensifying would increase intimacy, while a stagnating relationship would terminate itself. The second criticism, according to James Honeycutt was that it is not the disclosures that lead to intimacy but the perception, and assigned meaning to what was disclosed that determined intimacy. This led to a second generation theory devoted to relational development or a model of trajectories. The model of trajectories consisted of eleven phases;

a) ongoing intimacy or small talk and reflecting on the relationship; b) intimate commitment or believing in a shared future; c) intensifying or gaining a sense of privacy; d) explorational communication or feeling confident about the each other; e) initial interaction or being attracted to one another; f) individuals or a growing level of interest; g) dyadic breakdown or feeling dissatisfied; h) intrapsychic phase or brooding about problems in the relationship; i) dyadic negotiation or avoiding problems; j) social phase of seeking support; k) grave dressing or making sense of a terminating relationship. (Wood, 1997, p.242)

Honeycutt believed that people use past knowledge and experience to define movement toward closeness (Wood, 1997, p. 239). These “trajectories” or personal understandings guide us in how we perceive what is occurring between us and someone else. As a result, Honeycutt’s claim changed the way that theorists look at behavior and communication patterns at different stages of relationships. Relational stages are no longer in a fixed sequence, but may skip stages or exhibit different zig-zag like patterns. In light of previous research, communication in interpersonal relationships, such as marriage should be viewed as an ongoing process. These new findings have given rise to a more modern approach to the way that relationships are conceptualized as opposed to

earlier models which conceptualize relationships in terms of “lust, dust and rust” (Fitzpatrick, 1993, p. 284). It is possible for relationships to grow, mature, and “evolve into highly intimate, long term relationships” (Fitzpatrick, 1993, p. 284). This is essential because this process is interconnected with individuals as they seek to find to find their own identity. Along with that identity comes the emotional ties of commitment, disclosure, and trust.

As we continue on the journey to dig deep into the world of marital relationships and how “couples talk”, our window view should be getting bigger. I certainly agree that the theory of trajectories proposed by Honeycutt, adds a new dimension to the model of relational development. I also agree that the perception and meaning that we assign to symbols used in personal relationships moves us closer to what we deem as intimacy. However, this does not take away the role or from the importance of social penetration theory. Relationships do not have a mind of their own or automatically spiral on autopilot. People have and do make choices about intimacy in their relationships. In fact, it is the perception of cost, rewards and experiences with others that help us to assign meaning to relationships and enjoy the benefits of intimate and meaningful exchange. While intimacy means different things to different people, there may multiple factors that contribute to marital satisfaction. Understanding relationships in the context of culture we are shaped in has become the “core of relational communication” (Fitzpatrick, 1993, p. 282). While idioms are a small part of that world, they are one key that may bring us closer to understanding what makes the marital dyad so unique.

#### Future Research

For future research, I would replicate this study to a larger participant sample, I would use a laboratory setting in order to facilitate more ease when it comes to returning

the surveys. I would also include a measure for sexual satisfaction, to determine if it would play a role in marital satisfaction. In addition, I would incorporate some of the eight group types used in other studies. This may provide more specifics within each group. Instead of just three or four couple types, I would use six couple types across the family life span.

Another option would be to compare married couples with co-habiting couples in order to see if similar trends exist. Since research indicates that co-habiting couples also use idioms, it would interesting to see what if, any differences exist among this type of long term relationship.

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## APPENDIX A

## Human Subjects Proposal

Dr. Thomas J. Socha  
Human Subjects Coordinator  
Department of Communication and Theatre Arts  
Old Dominion University  
Norfolk, VA 23529

Dear Sir:

Re: Human Subjects Letter

**Purpose:** To find out if there are any differences in frequency of idiom use between married couples with and without children.

**Confidentiality:** To ensure confidentiality of subjects in this study, participants names or identities will be linked to any information or results gained from this study. To further ensure anonymity, the surveys will be automatically numbered.

**Risks:** There is very little risk involved in this study. Participants will be asked to discuss somewhat a personal topic.

**Time:** The approximate time that is needed for each couple to fill out the survey is 5-8 minutes each.

**Incentive:** The incentive I plan to offer is an opportunity for extra credit for students in a Communication course and/or a coupon from a nearby store.

**Debriefing:** Results can be mailed to the participants after the study has been concluded.

**Participants:** the participants will consist of Sixty married couples. They will be a convenience sample.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Meredith Raynor

## APPENDIX B

## Consent Form

Dear Participant:

I request your permission to use your responses in a research study about how close relationships communicate. Your answers are anonymous. You and your partner will be asked to fill out an idiom report together, after which you will separately fill out a questionnaire which should take about 5-8 minutes each. Please fill out the questionnaire completely and as honestly as you can. Return both questionnaires and the consent form to your professor or child study director at the designated time. You may receive an opportunity for extra credit or a coupon for your participation. Results can be mailed to you at the address of your choice after the study has been concluded. Thank you very much for your support.

Sign here: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

ALL INFORMATION IS ANONMYOUS!!

Your participation is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions, please contact me using my email [Mtg300z@yahoo.com](mailto:Mtg300z@yahoo.com).

## APPENDIX C

## Marital Communication Study

Instructions: Parts I and II are to be completed individually by each spouse. Please do not share your answers or work together on Parts I and II. Part III asks you to work together as a couple.

## Part I

To be completed by each spouse alone.

Instructions: For the following questions, please circle the appropriate response.

- |  | All the<br>Time | Most of the<br>time | More often<br>than not | Occas-<br>sionally | Rarely | Never       |
|--|-----------------|---------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------|-------------|
|  | 0               | 1                   | 2                      | 3                  | 4      | 5           |
| 1. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation or terminating your relationship?       |                 |                     |                        |                    |        | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. How often do you and your mate leave the house after a fight?   |                 |                     |                        |                    |        | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?                 |                 |                     |                        |                    |        | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. Do you confide in your mate/partner?  |                 |                     |                        |                    |        | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. Do you ever regret that you married (or lived together)?  |                 |                     |                        |                    |        | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. How often do you and your partner quarrel?  |                 |                     |                        |                    |        | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves"?  |                 |                     |                        |                    |        | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. Do you kiss your mate/Partner?  |                 |                     |                        |                    |        | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. Circle the number which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered of your relationship: |                 |                     |                        |                    |        |             |

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

0= extremely unhappy 1= fairly unhappy 2= a little happy 3=happy  
4=very happy 5=extremely happy 6=perfect

10. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about your relationship?

\_\_\_\_\_ I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and would go to almost any length to see that it does.

\_\_\_\_\_ I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do all I can to see that it does.

\_\_\_\_\_ I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and I will do my fair share to see that it does.

\_\_\_\_\_ It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I can't do much more than I am doing now to help it succeed.

\_\_\_\_\_ It would be nice if it succeeded, but I refuse to do any more than I am doing now to keep the relationship going.

\_\_\_\_\_ My relationship can never succeed, and there is no more that I can do to keep the relationship going.

Marital Communication Study

Part II

To be completed by each spouse.

How many years have you been married to your current partner? \_\_\_\_\_

From this relationship-Do you have children (circle one)? Yes No

From a previous relationships do you have children? Yes No

If so, what are the ages of your children from this relationship? \_\_\_\_\_  
Previous relationships? \_\_\_\_\_

Your Age (in years): \_\_\_\_\_

Your Gender (circle one): Male Female

[Please turn to the next page]



## Marital Communication Study

## Part III

## Instructions:

A ***personal idiom*** is any word, phrase, or gesture that has evolved unique meanings within a relationship. That is, personal idioms mean something unique and special TO YOU AS A COUPLE; Individuals outside your relationship would not understand their meaning. Here are three examples of personal idioms and the unique meaning they hold for these couples:

"Sweet pea."	Idiom used as a nickname for wife by husband
"Too-Hoot"	Idiom used as a sexual invitation by wife to husband
"Futtbutt"	Idiom used as a teasing insult by husband to wife

**Together** please use the table on the next page(s) to describe as many personal idioms as you can that are used in your relationship. In the Table (next page), (1) please list the idiom, (2) tell what it means, (3) estimate how often it is used, and (4) who uses it? Please write as many personal idioms as you can recall.

[Please turn to the next page]

## Idiom List

Scale for frequency indicate of how often the idiom is used:

1 = never 2= rarely 3=seldom 4=sometimes 5=very often

[illegible]

## Idiom List

Scale for frequency indicate of how often the idiom is used:

1 = never 2= rarely 3=seldom 4=sometimes 5=very often

[illegible]

## APPENDIX D

## Codebook

VARIABLE	DESC	CODE	COLUMN
1. ID	Subject identification	1-65	1
2. GENDER	Sex of subject	male/female	2
3. DISCUSS	how often you discuss divorce	0-5	3
4. LEAVE	how often you leave after an argument	0-5	4
5. NGENERAL	generally how often do you think things are going well	0-5	5
6. CONFIDE	do you confide in your partner	0-5	6
7. REGRET	do you regret that you married	0-5	7
8. QUARREL	how often do you quarrel	0-5	8
9. IRRITATE	how often do you get on each other's nerves	0-5	9
10. KISS	do you kiss your mate	0-5	10
11. HAPPINESS	the degree of happiness	0-6	11
12. RELATSHP	how you feel about	0-5	12
13. MARRIED	how many years you have been married	1-50	13
14. PRESREL	how many children in present relationship	0-7	14
15. PASTREL	how many children from past relationship		15

VARIABLE	DESC	CODE	COLUMN
16. CHILD1	age of child		16
17. CHILD2	age of child		17
18. CHILD3	age of child		18
19. CHILD4	age of child		19
20. CHILD5	age of child		20
21. CHILD6	age of child		21
22. CHILD7	age of child		22
23. URAGE	what is your age		23
24. CTYPE	couple type	newlywed=1 with kids=2 emptynest=3	24
25. WIFREC	number of idioms recalled by wife	0-10	25
26. HUSREC	number of idioms recalled by husband	0-10	26
27. IDIOM1	nickname idiom type		27
28. FREQ1	how often nicknames	never=1 rarely=2 seldom=3 sometimes=4 very often=5	28
29. IDIOM2	affection type idiom		29
30. FREQ2	how often affection is used	never=1 rarely=2 seldom=3 sometimes=4 very often=5	30
31. IDIOM3	label for other idiom type		31

VARIABLE	DESC	CODE	COLUMN
32. FREQ3	how often label for others used	never=1 rarely=2 seldom=3 sometimes=4 very often=5	32
33. IDIOM4	sexual reference idiom type		33
34. FREQ4	how often sexual references used	never=1 rarely=2 seldom=3 sometimes=4 very often=5	34
35. IDIOM5	sexual invitation idiom type		35
36. FREQ5	how often sexual invitation used	never=1 rarely=2 seldom=3 sometimes=4 very often=5	36
37. IDIOM6	teasing insult idiom type		37
38. FREQ6	how often teasing insult used	never=1 rarely=2 seldom=3 sometimes=4 very often=5	38
39. IDIOM7	requests idiom type		39
40. FREQ7	how often requests are used	never=1 rarely=2 seldom=3 sometimes=4 very often=5	40
41. IDIOM8	confrontation idiom type		41

VARIABLE	DESC	CODE	COLUMN
42. FREQ8	how often confrontation used	never=1 rarely=2 seldom=3 sometimes=4 very often=5	42
43. OTHER	other idiom type	1-10	43
44. SATIS	DISCUSS+LEAVE NGENERAL+CONFIDE REGRET+QUARREL+ IRRITATE+KISS+ HAPPINESS	0-46	44

## APPENDIX E

## Dyadic Adjustment Scale

Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

always agree 5	almost always 4	occasionally disagree 3	frequently disagree 2	almost always disagree 1	always disagree 0
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- |   |       |       |       |       |       |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. Handling family finances                     | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2. Matters of recreation                        | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3. Religious matters                            | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4. Demonstrations of affection                  | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5. Friends                                      | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 6. Sex Relations                                | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 7. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior) | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 8. Philosophy of life                           | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 9. ways of dealing with parents or in-laws      | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 10. aims, goals and things believed important   | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 11. amount of time spent together               | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 12. making major decisions                      | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 13. household tasks                             | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 14. leisure time interests and activities       | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 15. career decisions                            | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

All the time 0	most of the time 1	more often than not 2	occa sionally 3	rarely 4	never 5
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16. how often do you discuss or have you discussed divorce separation or terminating the relationship \_\_\_\_\_



17. How often do you or your mate leave the house after a fight? \_\_\_\_\_

18. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your mate are going well? \_\_\_\_\_

19. do you confide in your mate? \_\_\_\_\_

20. do you ever regret that you married (or lived together) ? \_\_\_\_\_

21. how often do you and your partner quarrel? \_\_\_\_\_

22. how often do you and your mate get on each other's nerves? \_\_\_\_\_

everyday 4      almost everyday 3      occasionally 2      rarely 1      never 0

23. Do you kiss your mate? \_\_\_\_\_

24. do you and your mate engage in outside interests together? \_\_\_\_\_

never 0      less than once a month 1      once or twice a month 2      once or twice a week 3      once a day 4      more often 5

25. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas \_\_\_\_\_

26. laugh together \_\_\_\_\_

27. calmly discuss something \_\_\_\_\_

28. work together on a project \_\_\_\_\_

there are some things about which couples sometimes agree and sometimes disagree. Indicate if either item below caused differences of opinion or were problems in your relationship during the past few weeks.

yes      no  
0      1

29. being too tired for sex \_\_\_\_\_

30. not showing love \_\_\_\_\_

31. the dots on the following line represent different stages of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, happy, represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please circle the dot which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship

extremely unhappy 0      fairly unhappy 1      a little happy 2      happy 3      very happy 4      extremely happy 5      perfect 6

32. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship?

\_\_\_\_\_ I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and would go to almost any length to see that it does.

- \_\_\_\_\_ I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do all I can to see that it does.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do my fair share to see that it does.
- \_\_\_\_\_ It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I can't do much more than I am doing now to help it succeed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I refuse to do more than I am doing now to keep the relationship going.
- \_\_\_\_\_ My relationship can never succeed, and there is nothing I can do to keep the relationship going.

## APPENDIX F

**COLLEGE OF ARTS AND LETTERS  
HUMAN SUBJECTS COLLEGE COMMITTEE**

**Application for Review of Potentially Exempted Research Involving Human Subjects**

In order to review your project expediently, please: (a) complete this application and (b) submit 2 copies of Application and all necessary documentation to: CAL Human Subjects College Committee Chair  
c/o Associate Dean for Research & Graduate Studies, BAL 900.

Name of Principal Investigator MEREDITH T. RAYNOL

Department HUMANITIES

Phone (757) 683-3719

FAX (757) 683-6191

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Project COUPLE TYPE AND FREQUENCY USE OF IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

Type of project: (check one):

\_\_\_\_\_ Faculty Research Project

☒ Student research: Name of Faculty Sponsor DR. TOM SOLHA

\_\_\_\_\_ Other: (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

Part I. Does the research involve:	Yes	No
1. external funding?	_____	<u>X</u>
b. identifying subjects or linking subjects to data?	_____	<u>X</u>
c. administering drugs or any other substances?	_____	<u>X</u>
d. access to subjects through a federal institution?	_____	<u>X</u>
5. subjects who are children or minors, prisoners, pregnant women, institutionalized in hospital or nursing home, mentally disabled persons or other vulnerable population?	_____	<u>X</u>
f. any special circumstances likely to lessen the degree of subjects' voluntariness in participating in research?	_____	<u>X</u>
g. any procedures that might place subjects at risk?	_____	_____
h. risks to confidentiality of data or responses?	_____	<u>X</u>
i. sensitive aspects of subject's own behavior (such as sexual behavior, drug or alcohol use, or illegal conduct)?	_____	<u>X</u>
j. any risks of criminal or civic liability or loss of financial standing or employability to the subject if the their responses become known?	_____	<u>X</u>

If Approved, when will the project begin? Spring 2004

When will the project end? SPRING 2004

Part II. Attach a description of the research project. The description should be brief but sufficiently thorough so that the Committee understands exactly how the research will be carried out. The description must contain:

Project Description (one paragraph description)

Procedures (In lay person language, describe what participants will be asked to do.

**Attach any questionnaires, letters, interview protocols, etc., that will be used in the study)**

Subject Population (From whom will data be collected and how?)

Consent Procedures (How will participants inform you that they agree to participate?)

Potential Risks (Include any you can think of, whether psychological, physical, emotional, social, affecting employability, financial standing, criminal or civil liability; be specific. Simply stating "no risk" is insufficient.)

Safeguards Against Risk (If any risk is involved, what will you do to protect the participants?)

Safeguards of Confidentiality (How will you protect the identity of the participants and their responses?)

Part III. Virginia Law identifies the following categories of research which can be reviewed by the College Committee because they are exempt from University Human Subjects Review Committee / Institutional Review Board (HSRC/IRB). **Circle which category below applies to your research:**

(1) Research or student learning assessments conducted in educational settings involving regular or special education instructional strategies, the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, or the use of educational tests, if the data from such tests are recorded in a manner so that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

☒ (2) Research involving survey or interview procedures unless responses are recorded in such a manner that the subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and either

(a) the subject's responses, if they became known outside the research, could reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subject's financial standing or employability or

(b) the research deals with sensitive aspects of the subject's own behavior, such as sexual behavior, drug or alcohol use, or illegal conduct;

(3) Research involving survey or interview procedures, when the respondents are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office;

(4) Research involving solely the observation of public behavior, including observation by participants, unless observations are recorded in such a manner that the subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and either

(a) the observations recorded about the individual, if they became known outside the research, could reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subject's financial standing or employability or

(b) the research deals with sensitive aspects of the subject's own behavior, such as sexual behavior, drug or alcohol use, or illegal conduct; and

(5) Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in a manner so that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

**Part IV. Please Note:**

You may begin research only when the College Committee gives notice of its approval.

You must inform the College Committee of any changes in method or procedure which may conceivably alter the risk potential of participating subjects.

You must inform the College Committee when your project is complete.

At any time the College Committee reserves the right to re-review a research project, to request additional information, to monitor the research for compliance, to inspect the data and consent forms, to interview subjects who have participated in the research, and if necessary to terminate a research project.

Date 1-13-04 Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator

Date 1-13-04 Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Sponsor (for student projects)

For CAL Human Subjects College Committee Use Only

R2: APR DPR Initials GW Date: 1/14/04

D2: APR DPR Initials GW Date: 1/14

Chair: APR DPR Initials GW Date: 1/14/04

**CAL Human Subjects College Committee Results:**

1. Based on the information provided by the project investigator(s), the CAL Human Subjects College Committee judges the study to be exempted from a full review by the University Human Subjects Review Committee / Institutional Review Board (HSRC/IRB) in accordance with the Virginia Code, and is approved.

Date 1-17-04

2. Complete information or documentation were not provided, or the CAL Human Subjects College Committee wishes additional information or answers to questions. Please provide these and resubmit your proposal.

Not Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

3. The CAL Human Subjects College Committee judges the study to not qualify for College Committee review. Your study **MUST** be sent to the University Human Subjects Review Committee / Institutional Review Board (HSRC/IRB) for review.

## VITA

Meredith T. Raynor  
Institute of the Humanities  
Old Dominion University  
Batten Arts & Letters, Rm 432  
Norfolk, VA 23529

### EDUCATION

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY – Norfolk, Virginia  
BACHELORS OF SCIENCE COMMUNICATION MAY 1997  
MASTERS OF ARTS HUMANITIES AUGUST 2004

#### Major coursework includes:

Introduction to Communications; Media Culture and Social Impact; Feature Story Writing; Editorial Writing; Family Communications; Children and Communication; Gendered Nonverbal; Interpersonal Communication.

#### Extracurricular Involvement Includes:

Vice President of Golden Key National Honor Society  
Member of Omicron Delta Kappa International Honor Society  
Member of Lambda Pi Eta Communication Honor Society

### EXPERIENCE

PATTEN, WORNOM, HATTEN & DIAMONSTEIN, LC –  
Newport News, VA – 4/2001 – Present

Intake Specialist/Claims & Settlements – Asbestos Dept.

#### Major Responsibilities Include:

Conduct settlement closings. Handle intake calls and conduct client interviews. Gather client information via asbestos packets. Create and open asbestos files in system. Process and resubmit rejected claims from asbestos manufacturers. Generate and prepare settlement releases to clients. Generate ls-33 employer approvals for workers compensation. Generate various requests for information from clients. Send requests for social security records, HIPPA authorizations to social security administration and various facilities. Provide additional administrative support as needed.

GLASSER & GLASSER, PLC – Norfolk, VA 1998 – 3/2001

Medical Legal Assistant – Intake Dept (Jan 2001–March 2001)

#### Major Responsibilities Include:

Process and handle intake calls from clients. Process and prepare questionnaire packets and enter client's information. Schedule appointments for pulmonary evaluations. Create,

open and close administrative matters. Request medical records and employment records from various facilities. Generate letters of correspondence. Liaison between client and attorney. Filing and copying of documents. Provide notary public for clients as needed.

#### LEGAL ASSISTANT – Lawsuit/Claims Department (Nov 1998–Jan 2001)

##### Major Responsibilities Include:

Process, prepare and file lawsuits for Asbestos Litigation for clients (who worked in various shipyards in the area or during their military career in the Navy) that have been exposed to asbestos through their workplace and/or asbestos manufactured products provided at the workplace. Provide service to appropriate court and defendants.

Amending of lawsuits as needed and notarization of affidavits. Generate monthly letters to various defendants. Filing and copying of documents as needed.

#### CHRISTIAN WORLD NEWS – Virginia Beach, VA (Spring 1995)

#### PRODUCTION ASSISTANT – Show Production Department

##### Major Responsibilities Include:

Prepared rundown operations for weekly show. Generated possible leads and assisted in weekly reporting. Provided assistance in tape dubbing and editing. Served as teleprompter for weekly show; was a liaison between producer and various contacts.

##### Related Skills Include:

Microsoft Word; Excel; GroupWise

Microsoft Access; WordPerfect; Powerpoint

RealLegal Practice Manager version 8

Omniform; Juris; Paperport

#### REFERENCES