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INTRA-COUPLE VARIABILITY IN MARITAL AGGRANDIZEMENT: IDEALIZATION AND SATISFACTION WITHIN ENDURING RELATIONSHIPS

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ABSTRACT

Selective recall of one's relationship history is significantly related to marital satisfaction. This tendency to negate the occurrence of negative interpersonal memories and events has been defined as marital aggrandizement. We contend that this phenomenon occurs as a function of individual beliefs and perceptions whereas others assume that marital aggrandizement is reciprocally determined between spouses. This latter theory views the couple as the primary unit of analysis in terms of the association between marital satisfaction and marital aggrandizement. Results of this study, however, do not support this systemic hypothesis. Analysis of responses from an international sample of older couples suggests that marital aggrandizement is largely independent between spouses. These results provide further understanding of the nature of this construct. Further research is required to identify the predictors and natural history of marital aggrandizement over time.

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*Love to faults is always blind,
Always is to joy inclined,
Lawless, winged, and unconfined,
And breaks all chains from every mind.*
(William Blake, 1791)

INTRODUCTION

It had long been thought that recollections are recalled as first encoded (Lamal, 1979). This view assumed that memories are stored and recalled largely intact. In contrast, contemporary theorists contend that memory is a malleable and adaptive process (e.g., Neisser & Winograd, 1988). As such, events and beliefs are recalled in context of current awareness in order for continuity of meaning and experience to be maintained over time. This view would appear most applicable to memory for personal life events (i.e., autobiographical memories) as selective recall is most likely to occur as a function of their subjective valence (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996).

Selective recall (and forgetting) has emerged as a significant correlate of marital satisfaction (Grigg, 1994). As a result of previous research, the first author and colleague have defined this tendency to negate the occurrence of negative interpersonal experience as *marital aggrandizement* (O'Rourke & Wenaus, 1998). The current study examines whether this construct is reciprocally determined between spouses or if the individual is the primary unit of analysis irrespective of the beliefs of one's spouse.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF MARITAL AGGRANDIZEMENT

The operational definition of marital aggrandizement evolved from our previous research and others' related work (e.g., O'Rourke & Wenaus, 1998; Schumm, Bollman, & Jurich, 1981). We hypothesize that this construct is a distinct response style by which persons convey an exceedingly positive portrayal of their spouse and marriage (e.g., "My spouse has never made me angry"; "I do not recall a single argument with my spouse"). In effect, marital aggrandizement entails a propensity to discount negative interpersonal experience (O'Rourke & Cappeliez, 2002). We therefore assume that this phenomenon entails the suppression of memories previously within awareness or radical reframing of experience such that the valence of interpersonal perceptions are redefined to assume a meaning antithetical to initial perception (e.g., infidelity retrospectively redefined as an opportunity to strengthen one's marriage).

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We further assume that marital aggrandizement does not entail psychopathology but serves an adaptive function (O'Rourke et al., 1996). It is believed that married persons reconcile the continuity of their relationships with negative interpersonal experience. In other words, awareness that one has chosen to remain married to the same person may be incongruent with beliefs that challenge this decision. In order to sustain contentment, spouses attend to beliefs that support the continuity of the relationship (O'Rourke, 2002). Beliefs incongruent with current satisfaction are less likely to be recalled and retained (Karney & Coombs, 2000).

Furthermore, we contend that those who convey idealized depictions of their relationship invariably provide elevated responses to other couples measures (O'Rourke & Cappeliez, 2001); however, contentment within marriage does not necessarily entail aggrandizement of one's relationship history. Marital satisfaction can exist independent of marital aggrandizement whereas it is assumed that the reverse cannot occur (i.e., marital aggrandizement without marital satisfaction). In other words, marital aggrandizement is but one means by which marital satisfaction can be perceived.

IS MARITAL AGGRANDIZEMENT A DYADIC CONSTRUCT?

In prior research with spouses of persons with dementia, the first author and colleague asserted that the individual is the locus of origin of marital aggrandizement (O'Rourke & Wenaus, 1998). Within this patient-caregiver dyad, it is unlikely that spouses reinforce each other's perceptions. Indeed, the capacity to engage in reciprocal reflection upon shared autobiographical memories becomes impossible as neurodegeneration strips patients of their memories (DeLongis & O'Brien, 1990).

A contrary view is held by Fowers and Applegate (1996) who contend that marital aggrandizement is reciprocally determined between spouses. They assume a sequence of circular reinforcement by which perceived satisfaction spirals upward within couples. Perceptions of the marriage become exclusively positive as each reinforces these beliefs of the other. Fowers and Applegate (1996) find support for this systemic hypothesis of reciprocal reinforcement in the significant correlation between marital aggrandizement and marital satisfaction.

One explanation for this discrepancy may be a function of the study samples. For instance, we examined responses from spouses of persons with dementia (O'Rourke et al., 1996). As a result, marital aggrandizement may be inordinately affected by caregiving demands. Is it possible to generalize results from this population to couples not facing the hardship of such a debilitating illness?

In contrast, the sample analyzed by Fowers and Applegate (1996) appears overly heterogeneous with some couples married for only a few months. One can assume that perceptions of the relationship change over the course of one's marital history (Holmberg & Holmes, 1994). Again, sample characteristics preclude definitive conclusions about the nature of marital aggrandizement and its relation with marital satisfaction.

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The present study examines the nature of the interrelation between marital aggrandizement and marital satisfaction. The reciprocal reinforcement hypothesis (Fowers & Applegate, 1996) is contrasted with our view that marital aggrandizement and marital satisfaction are primarily the product of individual beliefs and perceptions. Responses from an international sample of adults married 20 or more years is examined to address this question.

This theoretical distinction is germane in terms of our understanding of the etiology of marital aggrandizement and its relationship with marital satisfaction. The means by which researchers study marital aggrandizement within and among couples requires such prior understanding. Identifying the individual versus the dyad as the locus of origin determines the analytic strategies by which this construct should be studied in future research (Kashy & Snyder, 1995).

METHODS

Participants

Although marital aggrandizement can exist at any point, it can be measured with greater accuracy in later relationship stages. Among newlyweds, for instance, idealization of the relationship may reflect the novelty of married life and less than complete knowledge of one's spouse. Early on, one may endorse the statement, "I have never known a moment of sexual frustration during my marriage", because this experience has yet to occur. Credible endorsement of such statements, however, becomes increasingly unlikely with the passage of time. Given this understanding, participation in the current study was restricted to those within enduring marriages.

Eighty-four couples were recruited for the current study. The average age of participants was 63.4 years with 14.8 years of formal education on average. Participants had been married an average of 37.2 years. The majority were in their first marriage (88%) though a notable percentage had been married twice (10%) or more (2%). Seventy-six percent of participants stated that the quality of their marriage was either excellent or very good. Similarly, 50% indicated that they believed they were happier than the average couple. Only 2% stated that they were less happy.

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Table 1. Descriptive Features of Participants and Study Variables (N = 84 dyads)

Feature	Mean (<i>SD</i>)	Range	Alpha
Age of Participants	63.4 (9.33)	50 to 95	
Years Married	37.2 (9.25)	20 to 60	
Years of Education	14.8 (3.66)	0 to 25	
Chronic Health Conditions	1.88 (1.37)	0 to 6	
Marital Aggrandizement Scale			
	90. (3.93)	0 TO 15	.82
Husbands			
Wives	6.17 (4.25)	0 TO 15	.85
Dyadic Adjustment Scale			
	112 (19.7)	22 TO 144	.92
Husbands			
Wives	111 (16.7)	57 TO 136	.91

Printed Page Participants

A total of 66 couples completed the printed-page version of study questionnaires. These respondents were recruited through media advertisements, notices appearing in seniors' publications, contacts with community groups, and word-of-mouth. The majority of questionnaires were returned and completed. This high rate of response is due to the fact that prospective participants expressed interest, or agreed to take part, before questionnaires were sent to them.

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Internet Participants

Eighteen additional couples participated via an Internet website where study questionnaires were posted. Data were forwarded automatically by e-mail as participants proceeded from one page to the next. Questionnaires were routed through the Internet service provider thus masking the e-mail address and time zone in which responses originated.

Postings announcing this study were placed at dedicated websites for seniors (e.g., American Association of Retired Persons, SeniorNet, 50+ Net, Age of Reason). Direct appeals were also made to older adults seeking e-mail pen-pals, a request for participants was placed in an Australian electronic senior's newsletter (<http://www.aboutseniors.com.au>), and reciprocal links were placed between this website and others directed toward older adults.

Of those who identified their country of origin, more than 70% stated that they lived in the United States. Participants from Canada, Australia and New Zealand were also recruited. Roughly one-third of participants did not provide geographic information precluding country-specific comparisons.

Of note, Internet and printed-page participants appear largely indistinguishable as few demographic differences appear between groups. For instance, age does not differ ($t[166] = 0.17$, *ns*), education ($t[164] = 1.03$, *ns*), years married ($t[166] = 0.03$, *ns*), nor socioeconomic status based upon work performed either now or prior to retirement (chi-square [5, $n=167$] = 7.18, *ns*). The primary between group difference pertains to physical health as Internet respondents endorsed more chronic health conditions as compared to printed-page respondents ($t[165] = 2.40$, $p < .05$).

Geography is a further criterion that distinguishes participants. The majority of printed-page participants live in Canada whereas Internet respondents live primarily in the U.S., and most in rural areas. Higher than expected rates of rural participation may be explained by the fact that persons outside of urban centers are less often solicited to participate in academic research.

Measures

Dyadic Adjustment Scale

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976) is a 32-item measure developed to assess marital satisfaction (e.g., "How often do you confide in your spouse? "; "Do you and your spouse engage in outside interests together? "). Responses are recorded along a series of 5- and 6-point Likert-type scales, two yes/no questions, and one final question which persons are asked to endorse the statement which best reflects their expectation of relationship continuity (six response alternatives provided). The DAS provides a total score composed of four subscale totals. Most often, only the scale total is reported. Scale scores over 99 suggest stability of the marriage and overall satisfaction (Stuart, 1992); however, elevated totals (i.e., $DAS > 120$), may indicate inordinate self-sacrifice or idealization of the relationship (Kazak, Jarmas, & Snitzer, 1988).

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Responses to the DAS have been shown to be internally consistent. For example, Cronbach's alpha for responses to the full scale has been reported as $\alpha > .89$ by various authors (Stuart, 1992). Over an 11 week interval, test-retest reliability of responses has been reported as $r = .96$ suggesting construct stability (Stuart, 1992).

Concurrent validity of responses to the DAS has been established relative to similar instruments such as the Personal Authority in the Family System Scale (Rabin, Bressler, & Prager, 1993) and the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale (as reported by Stuart, 1992). Responses to the DAS have also been purported to possess predictive validity in terms of domestic violence, interpersonal communication, family dysfunction, and depressive affect (Stuart, 1992).

Marital Aggrandizement Scale

The Marital Aggrandizement Scale (MAS; O'Rourke, 2002) was developed as a marital measure of biased responding. (See Appendix 1.) The 18 MAS items were written in extreme terms such that they cannot be endorsed without conveying an inordinately positive depiction of the marriage. Respondents indicate their degree of agreement to each statement upon a 7-point, Likert-type scale. Only upper-end responses (i.e., 6 or 7) are tallied (subsequent to reversal of four negatively-keyed items). Possible MAS totals range from 0 to 18 with higher scores suggestive of greater marital aggrandizement.

Internal consistency has consistently been reported as $\alpha = .84$ and test-retest reliability of responses has been reported as $r(200) = .80$ over an average interval of 15 months (O'Rourke & Cappeliez, 2002). Responses to the MAS also appear to be gender invariant. In other words, male and female respondents appear to interpret and respond to MAS items in a similar manner (O'Rourke & Cappeliez, 2001).

The concurrent and discriminant validity of responses to the MAS have been demonstrated relative to separate measures of biased responding, marital satisfaction, and psychological well-being respectively. In confirmatory factor analytic research, we reported that marital

aggrandizement loads upon the same latent construct as other indices of biased responding, without significantly loading upon marital satisfaction (O'Rourke & Cappeliez, 2002). This finding supports the assertion that marital aggrandizement exists as a measure of biased responding as opposed to heightened marital satisfaction (cf. Fowers, Applegate, Olson, & Pomerantz, 1994; O'Rourke & Cappeliez, 2002).

Furthermore, our prior research further suggests that response levels to the MAS are similar for both men ($\alpha = .85$, $M = 5.44$, $SD = 4.16$) and women ($\alpha = .84$, $M = 4.69$, $SD = 3.82$; $t[160] = 1.18$, *ns*). Nor do age ($r[160] = .06$, *ns*), years of education ($r[156] = .02$, *ns*), years married ($r[160] = .15$, *ns*), number of times married ($r[160] = -.01$, *ns*), religious denomination ($F[8,156] = 1.16$, *ns*), nor religious service attendance ($r[153] = .08$, *ns*) appear related to MAS response levels (O'Rourke & Cappeliez, 2002).

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Demographics Questionnaire

We adapted a questionnaire for this study to gather personal data and participant health information. As well as information pertaining to socioeconomic status, participants were asked to indicate if they had been diagnosed with 14 separate chronic health conditions common to older adults (Canadian Study of Health and Aging Working Group, 1994).

RESULTS

Analysis One

The first index of note is the low correlation of MAS scores within couples ($r[84] = .27$, $p < .05$). This coefficient indicates that only 7% of variance in marital aggrandizement scores is shared between spouses. Correlation between DAS scores within couples is somewhat greater ($r[84] = .41$, $p < .01$). This too, however, indicates that only 17% of variance in marital satisfaction can be explained by reported satisfaction by one's spouse.

Table 2. Correlation Coefficients among Study Variables (N = 84 dyads)

	DAS - Self	DAS - Spouse	MAS - Self
DAS – Spouse	.41		
	(.01)		
MAS – Self	.51	.30	
	(.01)	(.01)	
MAS – Spouse	.25	.56	.27
	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)

Note. DAS = Dyadic Adjustment Scale, MAS = Marital Aggrandizement Scale. Parenthetical values represent significance estimates (i.e., p values).

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To address this question of nonindependence more precisely, further analyses were performed comparing responses to the MAS and DAS. This was undertaken to examine not only the degree to which one spouse's level of marital satisfaction predicts his or her level of marital aggrandizement, but also the extent to which marital satisfaction influences responding by one's spouse.

The effect of marital satisfaction upon marital aggrandizement for that individual is referred to as an *actor effect* whereas the influence of marital satisfaction upon marital aggrandizement of one's spouse is a *partner effect*. According to Kenny (1996), an actor effect is evident when one spouse's response to a predictor variable affects his or her responses to an outcome variable. In contrast, a partner effect is evident when one's response to a predictor variable affects his or her spouse's response to an outcome variable. To this end, a within-couples regression equation was computed in which difference scores between the responses to both the DAS and MAS by husbands and wives were first calculated. The dependent variable for this equation was the difference between each couple's marital aggrandizement scores and the predictor variable was the difference score in marital satisfaction ($R^2 = .12$, $p < .01$, $\beta_{\text{within}} = .35$).

A second regression equation (between couples) was computed in which the average of each couple's MAS scores was predicted by the average of their combined responses to the DAS ($R^2 = .34$, $p < .01$, $\beta_{\text{between}} = .58$). The actor effect was computed as the average of these two standardized coefficients (actor = .465) whereas the partner effect is the difference of between and within betas, divided by two (partner = .115). Given the interrelation between scores, pooled standard errors were computed as well as a modified estimate of degrees of freedom (see Kashy & Snyder, 1995 for these formulae).

The degree to which marital satisfaction contributed to each spouse's level of marital aggrandizement emerged as significant (actor effect; $t[161] = 6.2$, $p < .01$); in contrast, marital satisfaction does not appear to contribute significantly to reported marital aggrandizement by one's spouse (partner effect; $t[161] = 1.53$, $p > .10$). These results support the hypothesis that the individual is the primary unity of analysis rather than the relationship. Marital aggrandizement thus appears unrelated to the level of marital satisfaction expressed by one's partner.

Analysis 2

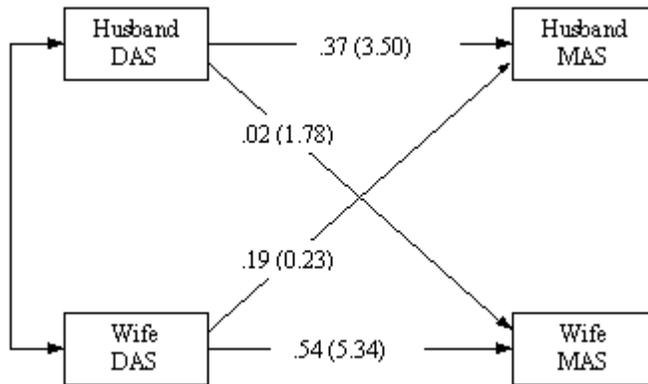
Based upon initial findings, responses were compared separately for husbands and wives (i.e., shift from the couple as the unit of analysis). With covariance partialled out between marital satisfaction and aggrandizement for husbands and wives, subsequent analyses set out to determine if additional variance was evident across gender. That is, does satisfaction of either husbands or wives predict marital aggrandizement of the other? This question was addressed by path analysis computed with the AMOS program (Arbuckle, 1999). In contrast to multiple

regression, SEM allows for simultaneous analysis of covariance among variables thus reducing the likelihood of capitalization on chance.

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Figure 1. Path Analytic Model of Marital Satisfaction and Marital Aggrandizement



Note. Maximum likelihood estimates (standardized solution; parenthetical significance values are expressed as *t* statistics). DAS = Dyadic Adjustment Scale, MAS = Marital Aggrandizement Scale.

This path analytic model provides an effective fit of data (chi-square [df=1] = 1.36, *ns*). The parameter estimates for the within-gender paths and each error term differ significantly from zero (i.e., $-1.96 < t \text{ values} > 1.96$). The Comparative Fit Index suggests effective fit of data (CFI = 1.00) and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation is within acceptable parameters (i.e., $RMSEA < .08$; $RMSEA = .066$; MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996).

Marital satisfaction significantly contributes to observed variance in marital aggrandizement for husbands and wives in accord with previous results; however, satisfaction does not appear to be associated with marital aggrandizement across gender. With the significant association between DAS and MAS scores controlled, no additional variance emerged to suggest a contribution of marital satisfaction to observed variance in marital aggrandizement across gender. These results, again, are at odds with the hypothesis of reciprocal determination. With responses compared for husbands and wives, the individual again emerged as the locus of origin in terms of the association between marital satisfaction and marital aggrandizement.

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Analysis Three

One final question pertained to a possible synergistic effect that might exist between spouses' responses to the MAS. Is it feasible that an interaction effect in marital aggrandizement as

reported by husbands and wives may impact marital satisfaction of either gender? To address this question, separate hierarchical regression equations were computed for men and women with a new variable computed as the product of marital aggrandizement scores for each couple (i.e., husband's MAS x wife's MAS). With 84 men and women, this sample size is adequate to guard against Type II errors with four independent variables assuming a medium effect size (Cohen, 1992).

Separate hierarchical regression equations were computed with husband and wives' DAS scores as dependent variables. For both equations, the DAS and MAS scores of one's spouse were first entered as well as the individual's MAS score. The MAS product term was entered as a second step. For neither men nor women did an interaction emerge in terms of couples' marital aggrandizement scores relative to marital satisfaction ($F[4,79] = .14, ns$ and $F[4,79] = .64, ns$ respectively). Inclusion of this step provided only 0.1% increase in observed variance in men's DAS scores ($R_{\text{squared}} = .29, p < .01$) and 0.5% increase in women's DAS scores ($R_{\text{squared}} = .40, p < .01$). Again, the individual emerged as the locus of origin independent of the perceptions of one's spouse.

DISCUSSION

Results of this study provide consistent support for our assertion that marital aggrandizement exists primarily as a function of the individual's perceived level of marital satisfaction (and vice versa). Negation of negative interpersonal experience does not appear related to a similar propensity by one's spouse. These results support our contention that the individual is the locus of origin of marital aggrandizement. Separate analyses upon data derived from an international sample of older couples provide consistent support for this hypothesis.

One explanation for the contrast between findings of this study and those reported by Fowers and Applegate (1996) pertains to measurement of marital aggrandizement. Whereas Fowers and Applegate (1996) report analyses of responses from the Marital Conventionalization Scale (MCS; Edmonds, 1967), results of this study are based on the more recent Marital Aggrandizement Scale (O'Rourke & Cappeliez, 2002).

Developed in the 1960s, the MCS validation sample recruited by Edmonds was composed of married students from one American university. Given the homogeneity of this sample, duration since validation and the evolution of research and theory, development of a more contemporary measure was warranted (Haynes, Richard, & Kubany, 1995). The MAS emerged as a result.

A further difficulty with Fowers and Applegate's research pertains to use of an abridged version of the MCS (5 versus 15 items). These items were selected as those with the highest item-total correlations from Edmonds' (1967) initial validation study. Although used repeatedly over the past 20 years, it is unclear if this brief measure has ever been validated. More recent research indicates that responses to three of these five items possess weak reliability (O'Rourke, 2001). Divergent findings between this study and previous research may therefore stem from suspect psychometric properties of the brief MCS employed by Fowers and Applegate (1996).

Generalizability and Study Limitations

The current study made use of the Internet as a vehicle for data collection thus allowing for recruitment of participants from four nations. Although a significant proportion of these self-selected respondents identified their country of origin, roughly one-third did not provide geographic information. This precluded definitive nation-by-nation comparisons. As a result, country-specific patterns of response cannot be identified.

Use of the Internet has afforded participants considerable anonymity advantageous in response bias research (Paulhus, 1991). With added anonymity, however, comes concern regarding misrepresentation. Even though the title page requested the assistance of persons over 49 who had been married at least 20 years, it cannot be stated definitively that all respondents met these inclusion criteria. For instance, responses from two widowed persons were identified and excluded on the basis of demographic information derived by the final questionnaire.

Nor can it be said that this study is representative of the current cohort of older adults given that participants had completed an average of 14.8 years of formal education. In effect, this grouping is more educated than the norm as the majority had undertaken some post-secondary training. In a study by O'Rourke and Tuokko (2000), a representative sample of older Canadians ($M = 65.3$ years) reported that they had completed an average of 10.3 years of education ($SD = 3.75$). Similar to most research with self-selected participants, persons choosing to take part in this study are more educated than the population from which they are drawn. This limits generalizability as responses may not correspond to older adults with less education. Responses to the MAS and DAS may therefore differ from the broader population.

Results of the current study support our operational definition of marital aggrandizement as the individual appears as the locus of origin within this multinational sample of older adults. Marital aggrandizement does not appear to be reciprocally determined within couples as Fowers and Applegate have suggested (1996). Results of this study, however, need to be replicated with samples from other populations recruited via other methodologies. For instance, the ability to generalize these findings would be considerably increased with recruitment of randomly identified participants (versus self-selected samples). Furthermore, it is yet unclear if the same correlates of marital aggrandizement exist with same-gender couples or younger married adults.

Results of the current and prior studies suggest that marital aggrandizement is a significant phenomenon among older adult couples where illness is not predominant (O'Rourke, 2002). At this time, however, few conclusions can be drawn regarding the origin and role of this construct. Although it appears that the individual is the primary unit of analysis, at what point does it become necessary to aggrandize one's marriage? No conclusions regarding cause and effect relationships between study variables can be made as all data were collected at one point. Longitudinal research is required to measure the correlates and antecedents of marital aggrandizement over time.

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APPENDIX 1. MARITAL AGGRANDIZEMENT SCALE

Using the scale below as a guide, select the number beside each statement to indicate which applies to you, your spouse, or your relationship.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not True ----- Somewhat True ----- Very True						

- I cannot imagine having married anyone other than my spouse 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- My marriage has not been a perfect success * 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

- | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3. | There is never a moment I don't feel completely in love with my spouse | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. | I have been completely honest at all times with my spouse throughout our marriage | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5. | Most times, I know what my spouse is thinking before uttering a word | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6. | My spouse has never made me angry | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7. | If my spouse has any faults, I am not aware of them | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8. | I do not recall a single argument with my spouse | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9. | My spouse and I understand each other perfectly | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10. | I have never known a moment of sexual frustration during my marriage | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 11. | My spouse and I sometimes annoy each other * | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 12. | My spouse has never made me unhappy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 13. | Some of my dealings with my spouse are prompted by selfish motives | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 14. | I have never regretted my marriage, not even for a moment | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 15. | I always place the needs and wishes of my spouse before my own | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 16. | I have never imagined what it would be like to be intimate with anyone other than my spouse | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 17. | My marriage could be happier than it is * | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 18. | If every person in the world had been available and willing to marry me, I could not have made a better choice | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Note. Asterisked items are reverse keyed.

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