



Thankful Marriages: Mindfulness and Gratitude as Predictors of Marital Satisfaction in Greek Couples

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Thankful Marriages: Mindfulness and Gratitude
as Predictors of Marital Satisfaction in Greek Couples

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Abstract

For many years, marriage has served as one of the most meaningful components in individuals' lives and marital satisfaction has been a strong predictor of life satisfaction. Given the many documented benefits of happy marriages and the burdens associated with unhappy marriages, it is essential to understand the mechanisms that foster successful marriages. Toward this end, researchers have begun to explore how the personality traits that each spouse brings to the marriage relate to marital quality. For example, over the last two decades, mindfulness and gratitude have become burgeoning topics of inquiry with a large body of evidence linking them to more positive marital outcomes. At the same time, while the institution of marriage and family has reportedly been undergoing dramatic changes in many Western societies, marriage in Greece has allegedly exhibited impressive resilience. However, no empirical research to date has assessed this phenomenon. Thus, this study has two aims: the first is to examine modern Greek marriages and to propose potential explanations for their unusually low divorce rates while the second is to understand whether constructs such as mindfulness and gratitude contribute to marital satisfaction. Thus, 123 Greek married couples ($N = 246$) recruited through Facebook completed surveys on marital satisfaction, mindfulness, and gratitude. Results suggested that, for both husbands and wives, gratitude is much more relevant than mindfulness to marital satisfaction, although mindfulness moderates this relationship. Several explanations as to why Greek marriages remain intact are offered.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my amazing husband, Nikos Moraitakis, a constant source of unconditional love, support, and encouragement. Thank you for everything.

This thesis is also dedicated to my parents, George and Georgia Sigalas, who by great example taught me that if one perseveres long enough and does the right things long enough, the right things will happen. I am very grateful to be your daughter.

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This work would never have been completed without Dr. Jack Demick's endless patience, firm guidance, and great sense of humor. Thank you for enduring the process with me through all of its craziness.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Perhaps the oldest question in the research literature on marriage is "What distinguishes a happy marriage from one that is unhappy?" (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989, p. 9). It is an important question to ask: more than 9 in 10 people worldwide eventually get married (Myers, 2000) and an even higher percentage is in committed intimate relationships. Marriage serves as one of the most meaningful and influential components in people's lives and attaining a satisfying marriage is a nearly universal goal (e.g., Roberts & Robins, 2000).

New and increasingly sophisticated data have indicated that marital quality is a strong predictor of life satisfaction: married men and women are consistently happier, healthier, and less stressed, and report higher wellbeing than their unmarried counterparts (e.g., Impett et al., 2012; Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000; Rosowsky, King, Coolidge, Rhoades, & Segal, 2012) and several researchers have suggested that a high-quality marriage is the strongest correlate of happiness (Carr, Freedman, Cornman & Schwarz, 2014; Kamp Dush & Amato, 2005; Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005; Myers, 2000; Sedikides, Oliver, & Campbell, 1994). Indeed, data from six U.S. national surveys have indicated that marital quality is more strongly related to global, personal happiness than any other domain of satisfaction (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001), a finding confirmed by Proulx, Helms, and Buehler's (2007) meta-analysis of 93 studies examining marital quality and individual wellbeing.

More recently, marital quality has come to be viewed as a public health issue related to its established associations with health outcomes (e.g., Beach, Katz, Kim, & Brody, 2003; Robles, Slatcher, Trombello, & McGinn, 2014). For example, in their meta-analysis of 126 studies including over 12,000 subjects, Robles and colleagues (2014) have found that, across all studies, greater marital quality is significantly related to better physical health. In another type of research setting, couples observed in Gottman's (1999) Love Lab who eventually divorced showed greater physiological distress than couples whose marriages were stable (e.g., husbands of divorcing couples had heart rates 17 beats per min higher than husbands in stable marriages). Marital dissatisfaction has also been shown to accelerate a decline in physical health (e.g., Umberson, Williams, Powers, Liu, & Needham, 2006) and has been associated with an increased risk for developing an alcohol use disorder (Whisman, Uebelacker, & Bruce, 2006).

With respect to mental health, maritally distressed individuals are three times more likely to have a mood disorder, three times more likely to suffer from an anxiety disorder, and twice as likely to abuse substances (Uebelacker, Courtnage, & Whisman, 2003). There are two main groups of thought linking mental health with marital quality. First, the stress generation model (Davila, Bradbury, Cohan, & Tochluk, 1997) has posited that individuals with low psychological wellbeing encounter stressful interactions with their spouses and these stressful interactions, in turn, lead to even greater declines in psychological wellbeing. The marital discord model of depression (Beach, Sandeen, & O'Leary, 1990) has proposed that low-quality marriages lead to an increased risk of depression because spouses are the most important sources of individuals' social support, thus serving as a strong protective factor against depression (Kamp Dush, Taylor, & Kroeger, 2008). Within unhappy marriages, this social support is lacking.

In sum, given the documented salutary effects of happy marriages and the individual and societal burdens associated with unhappy marriages, it is essential to understand which factors contribute to the presence or absence of marital satisfaction. Such relations are explored below.

Defining Marital Satisfaction

In the marital literature, marital satisfaction has been broadly defined. Marital happiness, marital satisfaction, marital adjustment, marital success, companionship, marital commitment, social support, marital interaction, marital discord, forgiveness, and domestic violence have each been conceptualized as dimensions of marital quality and are sometimes combined into a single indicator of marital quality (Kamp Dush et al., 2008; Stanley, 2007).

Several scholars have recently critiqued research that uses global indicators of marital quality and have instead called for a more nuanced approach (e.g., Amato, Booth, Johnson, & Rogers, 2007; Fincham, Hall, & Beach, 2006). In spite of this trend, this study has focused only on marital satisfaction, that is, a judgment made by a spouse that indicates the sense of wellbeing he or she experiences in the marital relationship (Fincham, 2011) as well as his or her happiness with various domains of the marriage (Kamp Dush et al., 2008).

High marital quality has typically been operationally defined by high self-reported satisfaction with the relationship, predominantly positive attitudes toward one's partner, and low levels of hostile and negative behavior. In contrast, low marital quality has been characterized by low satisfaction, predominantly negative attitudes toward one's partner, and high levels of hostile and negative behavior (e.g., Roble et al., 2014).

What does a happy, stable marriage look like?

From a series of longitudinal studies beginning in the 1970s onward, the interpersonal habits characterizing spouses in satisfying marriages have been well-documented so much so that researchers have been able accurately to predict the fates of specific marriages—in some studies, with up to 94% accuracy (Gottman, 1999, 2011). Gottman has researched marital stability through direct scientific observation and concluded that there is a “magic ratio” of 5:1 marital interactions, that is, as long as there are five times as many positive interactions between spouses as there are negative, the marriage is likely to be stable. He (1999, 2005, 2011) has also demonstrated that the four behaviors most accurately predicting divorce are: criticism of one’s partner’s personality; exhibiting contempt; defensiveness; and stonewalling, (i.e., emotional withdrawal from interactions). Similarly, the California Divorce Mediation Project (Levenson, 2002) has reported the most frequent reason provided by couples for divorce to be an increasing distance between spouses, growing apart, and a decay of the marital friendship. Couples who incorporate respect and appreciation into their daily lives, on the other hand, have been shown to exhibit more favorable outcomes, most likely because they are creating a type of emotional savings account that can serve as a buffer when they must deal with a major life stressor or conflict (Gottman, 1999; Gottman et al., 2005).

Bradbury and Karney (2004) have argued that, to ensure marital success, it is critical to maintain a supportive and nurturing environment, which prevents decline in marital satisfaction. Using videotaped interactions of 172 couples over a 4-year period, they have determined that marital satisfaction declines for both spouses when higher levels of negative affect (e.g., expressions of anger, contempt) and negative skills (e.g., poor problem-solving) are present, coupled with lower levels of positive affect (e.g.,

humor, affection, interest/curiosity) and positive skills (e.g., validation, statements of praise/motivation). In contrast, couples with high levels of negative skills do not show a decrease in marital satisfaction when accompanied by a high amount of positive affect. Research (Johnson et al., 2005) has also indicated that high levels of positive marital interaction buffer the effects of high levels of negative skills

Other investigators have also found a relationship between marital satisfaction and spousal positivity. After administering a battery of seven assessments including individual and dyadic interviews to 43 couples, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Schlee, Monson, Ehrensaft, and Heyman (1998) have reported that couples could be differentiated based on measures of relationship positivity alone: happily married spouses engage in more frequent and specialized types of positive communication and express a higher caliber of caring gestures related to one's spouse. In a related study of 132 couples, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Smutzler, and Vivian (1994) have compared happy couples to distressed couples: spouses in happy marriages report a significantly higher frequency and quality of positive communication.

In a 17-year longitudinal study consisting of 2,034 married people, Previti and Amato (2003) have reported that individuals' reasons for staying together are specific to particular relationships and perceived rewards (e.g., love, friendship, and communication as frequently cited "rewards") and/or barriers (e.g., religion, children). Reporting "barriers only" as the reason for staying together was negatively correlated with marital happiness and positively correlated with marital instability. Conversely, reporting "rewards only" for staying together was positively correlated with marital happiness and negatively correlated with divorce proneness.

Personality Traits as Predictors of Marital Satisfaction: Mindfulness and Gratitude

Predicting marital wellbeing from “magic ratios” and conflict management skills alone is insufficient, however (Karney & Bradbury, 1997). Couples do not want to stay married because of their superb conflict-solving abilities or their positive/negative affectivity ratios. Couples stay married "because they find comfort and solace in one another's presence" (Bradbury & Karney, 2004, p. 865). Further, therapists have found that while some interventions work exceptionally well with some couples, they are a poor fit for others (e.g., Epstein & Baucom, 2002). One possible explanation for this is that interpersonal processes may be the result, in part, of underlying intrapersonal dimensions (Kelly & Conley, 1987).

With this in mind, the landscape of research on marital satisfaction within the past 15 years or so has been shifting, while work on intrapersonal factors (e.g., personality traits) has resurged after decades of being superseded by interpersonal process research. In some of the earliest intrapersonal research, Terman, Bittenwieser, Ferguson, Johnson, and Wilson (1938) argued that certain personality traits constitute an "aptitude for marriage" while others predispose couples to endings far less romantic: specifically, the authors proposed that, in many unhappy marriages, it would be possible to identify either in the husband, the wife, or both, elements of an "unhappy temperament" and evidence that these elements have played a causal role (pp. 110–111).

Since the 1930s, researchers have consistently demonstrated that specific personality traits are associated with marital outcomes (e.g. Botwin, Buss, & Shackelford, 1997; Donnellan, Assad, Robins, & Conger, 2007; Dyrenforth, Kashy, Donnellan, & Lucas, 2010; Heller, Watson, and Ilies, 2004; Jocklin, McGue, & Lykken; 1996; Karney & Bradbury, 1995, 1997; Malouff, Thorsteinsson, Schutte, & Rooke, 2010; Robins,

Caspi, & Moffitt, 2002; Rosowsky et al., 2012; Watson, Hubbard, & Wiese, 2000). For example, Karney and Bradbury's (1995) vulnerability-stress-adaptation model of marriage has bridged interpersonal and intrapersonal elements and highlighted that each spouse's personality traits influence relationship processes (e.g., with respect to the ways individuals and couples contend with differences of opinion and marital difficulties), which in turn influence marital outcomes (e.g., marital quality, proneness to divorce).

Building on Karney and Bradbury's (1995) work, other researchers (e.g., Barelds & Barelds-Dijkstra, 2010; Donnellan et al., 2004, 2007; Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson, 1998; McNulty & Russell, 2010) have employed personality traits to predict the nature of daily interactions in couples. These interactions have included how often spouses agree with one another, use humor, show affection, act with anger or hostility, behave possessively, or use maladaptive coping skills. They have then argued that these day-to-day experiences naturally shape marital quality. All in all, both theory and research have left little doubt that the personality traits that each spouse brings to the marriage are related to marital quality.

While the field of romantic relationships has been characterized mainly by a focus on distressed or vulnerable couples, research has recently begun to highlight the foundation of love and intimacy and the dynamics of well-functioning relationships (for a review, see: Lenger, Gordon, & Nguyen, 2017; Maniaci & Reis, 2010). For example, Fincham and Beach (2010) have made the case that personality variables need to be integrated into marital research to further understanding of how to propel happy marriages into optimal states of marital flourishing.

Thus, in attempting to discover mechanisms that foster the development and maintenance of successful relationships, researchers have begun exploring the potential

impact that positive personality traits and processes may have on the quality of romantic relationships. Constructs such as gratitude (e.g., Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Lambert & Fincham, 2011; Gordon, Arnette, & Smith, 2011; Gordon, Impett, Kogan, Oveis, & Keltner, 2012), mindfulness (Burpee & Langer, 2005; Langer, 1989), acceptance (Pakenham & Samios, 2013), and forgiveness (see Fincham & Beach, 2010, for a review), among others, have been shown to support both individual and dyadic wellbeing. Just as each individual's psychopathology is essential in understanding marital distress (Baucom, Whisman, & Paprocki, 2012), each spouse's individual strengths, such as mindfulness and gratitude, are equally essential to examine to develop interventions to assist them in cultivating optimal relationship functioning (Gordon & Baucom, 2009).

Mindfulness and Marital Satisfaction

Mindfulness has been promoted by numerous philosophical and spiritual contemplative traditions for millennia but has only recently been examined within a more empirical framework. Despite psychologists' substantial interest in the nature and effects of mindfulness, there has been a lack of consensus on how to define and measure it.

On the one hand, Kabat-Zinn's (1994) "Eastern approach" has conceptualized mindfulness as a state of present moment awareness and emphasized interventions, such as meditation, to help patients achieve this state. This concept of mindfulness has been practiced mainly through formal and informal meditation. On the other hand, the "Western camp," based on social psychology, has been heavily influenced by Langer's pioneering work (e.g., Carson, Langer, Gil, & Baucom, 2004; Langer, 1989; Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000), and has conceptualized mindfulness as "the act of noticing new things," a flexible state of mind in which people accept the continuously changing nature

of circumstances and flexibly shift perspectives in concert with changing contexts or, in Langer and Moldovenau's (2000) words, achieve a "heightened state of involvement and wakefulness, of being in the present" (p. 2). In contrast to Kabat-Zinn's conceptualization that has emphasized a non-judgmental awareness of the present moment, Langer's (1989) mindfulness has been defined as a mindset of actively constructing novel categories and distinctions. For Langer, mindfulness is the opposite of mindlessness, of being entrenched in previous categorizations that do not incorporate new information from the current situational context.

This socio-cognitive approach to mindfulness has differed from the meditative approach because it has usually included the external, material, and social contexts of individual participants (e.g., Baer, 2003; Langer, 1989; Pagnini, Bercovitz, & Phillips, 2018; Pirson & Langer, 2015) and it has pursued a learning agenda by its goal-orientation involving the use of mindfulness to enhance problem-solving and other cognitive abilities (e.g., Baer, 2003; Baer et al., 2008; Langer, 1989). For the duration of this thesis, the term "mindfulness" will be employed to refer to the Langerian framework while the phrase "meditative mindfulness" will be used to connote the framework developed by Kabat-Zinn.

The instrument measuring Langerian mindfulness has been the Langer Mindfulness Scale (LMS). The LMS was initially developed with 21-items to assess four factors: Novelty Seeking, Novelty Producing, Engagement, and Flexibility (Langer, 2004). These domains have described a person's openness to experience, willingness to challenge strict categories, and continual reassessment of the environment. A 14-item version was later introduced with just three main factors: Novelty Seeking, Novelty

Producing, and Engagement because all three of these were conceptualized as reflecting (cognitive) flexibility (Pirson, Langer, Bodner, & Zilcha, 2012).

Brown and Ryan (2003) have built on Langer's groundbreaking work but have instead emphasized open, undivided observation of what is occurring both internally and externally as the core of mindfulness. They have defined day-to-day mindfulness or dispositional mindfulness as a natural state of consciousness, varying between and within humans, which is characterized by the presence or absence of attention to or awareness of what is occurring in the present. Based on this definition, they have developed the dispositional Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), a 15-item survey that is the most widely utilized measure of mindfulness (see Kozlowski, 2013).

Another instrument measuring mindfulness, more oriented toward meditative mindfulness, has been the FFMQ (Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire), developed by Baer and colleagues. This scale has conceptualized mindfulness as a trait consisting of five facets: non-reactivity to inner experience; observing; describing; acting with awareness; and non-judgment of inner experience (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006).

In the last two decades, mindfulness has drawn a vast amount of attention, both empirically and clinically (Black, 2014), with a large body of evidence linking dispositional mindfulness to positive mental health outcomes. Research on mindfulness has sought to investigate how internal processes of attention (thoughts, emotions, or other inner experiences) are associated with various psychological traits (Brown & Ryan, 2003). For example, mindfulness is associated with less psychological distress and reduction in negative affectivity, anxiety, hostility, depression, and stress reactivity (e.g., Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000; Coffey & Hartman, 2008) and increased positive

affectivity, self-esteem, and life satisfaction (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Similarly, Bihari and Mullan's (2014) research on mindfulness has suggested that mindfulness enables individuals to engage more, feel more self-confident, and be less avoidant of uncomfortable situations.

Recently, greater attention has been paid to the relational aspects of mindfulness. This interpersonal concept has been referred to as "relational mindfulness," which has included increases in empathy, increased acceptance, lower reactivity, higher levels of emotional intelligence, and both speaking and listening mindfully when engaging with others (Falb & Pargament, 2012). There has also been evidence indicating that mindfulness is associated with lower stress, better communication patterns, compassion, and intimacy, (Barnes et al., 2007; Carson, Carson, Gil, & Baucom, 2004; Dekeyser, Raes, Leijssen, Leysen, & Dewulf, 2008). Based on the above, it comes as no surprise then that mounting evidence has also indicated that mindfulness is associated with more connected, close, and fulfilling interpersonal relationships (Baer, 2003; Barnes et al., 2007; Burpee & Langer, 2005; Carson et al., 2004; Dekeyser et al., 2008; Wachs & Cordova, 2007).

Several investigators (e.g., Burpee & Langer, 2005; Jones, Welton, Oliver, & Thoburn, 2011; Khaddouma, Gordon, & Bolden, 2015; Krafft, Haeger & Levin, 2017; Siegel, 2014; Wachs & Cordova, 2007) have even suggested that mindfulness may have considerable value for enhancing the quality of romantic relationships. For example, Kabat-Zinn (1993) has advanced that the receptive attentiveness defining meditative mindfulness may promote a greater ability or willingness to take an interest in one's partner's thoughts, emotions, and welfare. The antithesis of mindfulness has also been studied in the form of "stonewalling" and "defensiveness," two of what Gottman (1994)

has termed the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" threatening the death of marital relationships.

Research studies exploring the relations between mindfulness and relationship satisfaction have broadly fallen into two categories: those that have studied change in relationship satisfaction as a result of mindfulness-based interventions (e.g., Carson, Carson, Gil & Baucom, 2004, Siegel, 2014) and those that, consistent with the Langerian school, have considered mindfulness as a state, thereby defining the mindful trait as an individuals' natural baseline levels of mindfulness (e.g., Burpee & Langer, 2005; Jones et al., 2011; Krafft, Haeger & Levin, 2017; Wachs & Cordova, 2007).

Studies examining the efficacy of mindfulness interventions have found that increased mindfulness can enhance relationship satisfaction and that relationship improvements endure for up to 3 months (e.g., Carson et al., 2004; Siegel, 2014). In one of the first studies on mindfulness and romantic relationships employing a sample of non-distressed couples, Carson et al. (2004) have measured the effects of an 8-week Mindfulness-Based Relationship Enhancement (MBRE) program. Their findings have suggested that the intervention favorably influenced couples' relationship satisfaction, closeness, partner acceptance, relationship distress, and other relationship outcome measures. The intervention also demonstrated a positive impact on individual wellbeing.

In an 8-week longitudinal study of a mindfulness-based stress reduction program, Shapiro, Schwartz, and Bonner (1998) have reported that increased levels of mindfulness are associated with increases in self-reported empathy, a characteristic that is particularly likely to influence the maintenance of relationships, predict positive adaptive behaviors, and ultimately lead to relationship satisfaction.

Studies considering mindfulness have provided strong correlations between higher levels of dispositional mindfulness and greater relationship satisfaction. Mindfulness has appeared to create a more collaborative approach to relationships in which couples are less abrasive with one another and instead address problems both inside and outside their relationship together, which has been shown to reduce levels of perceived stress (Pettit & Joiner, 2006). Mindfulness has also been associated with effortful communication of emotions, compassion, intimacy, and general feelings of closeness to partners within romantic relationships (Dekeyser et al., 2008; Wachs & Cordova, 2007).

Through online self-reports from 95 participants, Burpee and Langer (2005) have investigated the relations among natural levels of trait mindfulness, marital satisfaction, and perceived spousal similarity. They have indicated that the strongest relations among the measured variables occur between marital happiness and mindfulness, which account for approximately 8% of overall satisfaction. Thus, spouses who are present-focused, mentally engaged, and open to new experiences, appear to benefit from greater happiness and fulfillment in their marriages. Further, while the LMS has uncovered four dimensions (novelty seeking, novelty producing, flexibility, engagement) only two of them (novelty seeking, novelty producing) demonstrate significant positive correlations with marital satisfaction. This has suggested that spouses benefit from mindful characteristics (e.g., present moment-awareness, lower reactivity, effortful mental engagement, openness to experience) leading to higher levels of satisfaction and an overall sense of fulfillment in their marriages.

Barnes and colleagues (2007) have also examined the role of mindfulness in romantic relationship satisfaction. They assessed students' dispositional mindfulness

through the use of Brown and Ryan 's (2003) MAAS. They have found that more mindful individuals report higher relationship satisfaction and engage in more relationally healthy responses to conflict. Specifically, more mindful individuals evidence less negative emotional expression during conflict and exhibit more positive perceptions of both their partners and relationships following conflict.

Coffey and Hartman (2008) have found both individual trait mindfulness and mindfulness-based interventions with couples to be associated with less psychological distress and enhanced levels of mental health for all individuals, which in turn is associated with healthier romantic relationships.

Wachs and Cordova (2007) studied married couples to investigate the importance of mindful relating to marital quality. They demonstrated that couple-level mindfulness is positively associated with global marital quality and emotional skills, including identification and communication of emotions, empathic concern, perspective taking, lack of personal distress, control of anger expression, and self-soothing of anger. These findings provide preliminary support for the notions that dispositional mindfulness contributes to greater marital satisfaction through the encouragement of more relationally skilled emotional repertoires and that couple-level mindfulness is related to marital quality by enabling spouses to respond to conflicts in more relationally adaptive manners.

Khaddouma and colleagues' (2015) recent work on the role of eastern mindfulness on sexual satisfaction has suggested that attending to and noticing, but refraining from evaluating, internal and external stimuli contribute to greater relationship satisfaction specifically by increasing sexual satisfaction with one's partner.

Further, a small body of research has explored the association between mindfulness and adult attachment styles within romantic relationships, demonstrating

positive correlations between trait mindfulness and secure attachments, such that individuals raised in warm, safe, attentive, and responsive environments tend to be more mindful in adult life. Jones and colleagues (2011) have purported that the role of spousal attachment is the mechanism through which trait mindfulness contributes to greater marital satisfaction. These results have suggested that mindfulness fosters a sense of security and safety within marital relationships, which in turn is associated with marital satisfaction. In contrast, anxiously attached adults are less able to exhibit traits of non-judgment, non-reactivity, and present-focused thoughts (also in Shaver, Lavy, Saron, & Mikulincer, 2007).

Most recently, Lenger, Gordon, and Nguyen (2017) have investigated the relations among Baer et al.'s (2007) five facets of mindfulness (measured by the FFMQ) and marital satisfaction in long-term married couples. They have reported that overall mindfulness is positively related to one's own marital satisfaction and that each individual facet of mindfulness is related to marital satisfaction. Consistent with other research on cross-partner effects of mindfulness on partners' marital satisfaction (e.g., Barnes et al. 2007; Pakenham & Samios, 2013), Lenger and colleagues did not find a statistically significant relationship, suggesting that overall mindfulness (Barnes et al. 2007) may be relevant to one's own relationship experience but not to one's partner's happiness.

Kozlowski (2013) has consolidated this work into a literature review and has illustrated a trend toward a positive link between mindfulness and relational outcomes, while McGill and colleagues (2016) have corroborated Kozlowski's (2013) conclusion by meta-analyzing 12 effect sizes from 10 different studies and have found that the relationship between mindfulness and relationship satisfaction is statistically significant (with an overall effect size of .27).

Collectively, these findings have implicated that mindfulness may be useful to relationship satisfaction in that more mindful couples have a generalized sense of wellbeing as well as tend to express higher senses of happiness and contentment, to engage in more constructive conflict, and to manage difficult emotions in more relationally adaptive manners. Although most of these studies have not employed methods allowing them to establish causality (e.g., happier couples may be more mindful as well), the associations in the existing literature have offered promising avenues of exploration on the potential relevance that mindfulness has to relational wellbeing on both the individual and dyadic levels.

Gratitude and Marital Satisfaction

Gratitude, a highly prized human disposition in Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu thought (McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons & Larson, 2001), has figured prominently among the positive dimensions of human experience. The famous quote by Cicero (ca. 60BC/trans. 1891), "[G]ratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others" (p. 80), has suggested that people who are grateful are expected to act in ways that are beneficial to themselves, people around them, and perhaps society at large.

During the 20th century, scholars in the social sciences have treated gratitude only cursorily (for a review, see McCullough et al., 2001). With the exception of the psychoanalytic work of Klein (1957)—which led to several theoretical treatments of and empirical articles on gratitude, its development, and clinical applications—gratitude had been referred to as "one of the neglected virtues in psychology" (Watkins, Woodward, Stone, & Kolts, 2003, p. 431). However, within the last 20 years, the seminal work of

Emmons, McCullough, and colleagues (e.g., Emmons & McCullough, 2003; McCullough, Tsang & Emmons, 2004) has highlighted the relevance of gratitude for understanding wellbeing, coping, and relationships, which has led gratitude to become a burgeoning topic of inquiry in recent years.

A common definition of gratitude is the feeling experienced when a beneficiary receives a benefit from a benefactor. For example, Emmons and McCullough (2004) have defined gratitude as the appreciation of an altruistic gift. In addition to this traditional type of gratitude (also called "benefit-triggered gratitude"), several researchers have identified a broader type of gratitude that includes being grateful for all sorts of gifts in life, including the presence of cherished others. For instance, Seligman and colleagues (2005) have defined gratitude as awareness of and thankfulness for the good things that are present in one's life (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). These authors have proposed that satisfied individuals report higher satisfaction with life through "meaning," "pleasure," and "engagement" (p. 413). Lambert and colleagues (2010) called this type of gratitude "generalized gratitude," and defined it as a state resulting from having an appreciation of that which is valuable and meaningful (Kubacka, Finkenauer, Rusbult, & Keijsers, 2011; Lambert et al., 2010). McCullough and colleagues (2002) have introduced the concept of gratitude orientation, that is, one's general tendency to recognize and respond with grateful emotion to the role of other people's benevolence in the positive outcomes that one experiences.

In contrast to definitions of gratitude that depend on individuals receiving benefits from benefactors, gratitude in the present study has been conceptualized as an individual experience occurring when one's attention is directed toward good things in either life, or one's spouse.

Empirical evidence has indicated that gratitude is strongly related to wellbeing (e.g., Emmons & McCullough, 2003, 2004; Kubacka et al., 2011; McCullough, Kimeldorf, & Cohen, 2008, Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004; Wood, Froh, & Geraghty, 2010) because it represents the quintessential positive personality trait, that is, an indicator of a worldview orientated toward appreciating the positive in life (Wood, Joseph, & Maltby, 2008). Seeing oneself as the beneficiary of other people's generosity may lead one to feel affirmed, esteemed, and valued, which may boost self-esteem and perceived social support (McCullough et al., 2008).

Dispositional gratitude has been found to correlate with more adaptive coping such as better sleep quality and more positive reinterpretations as well as less self-blame, substance use, and denial (Wood et al., 2007; Wood, Joseph, Lloyd & Atkins, 2009). Recent longitudinal studies have also corroborated that trait gratitude leads to higher levels of perceived social support and to lower levels of stress and depression (Wood, Maltby, Gillett, Linley, & Joseph, 2008). Grateful people have more positive views of their social environments (e.g., Wood, Joseph & Maltby, 2008, 2009), are more likely to feel loved and cared for by others (McCullough et al., 2001), have more positive traits (McCullough et al., 2008; Wood et al., 2008), and continually focus on the positive aspects of their environments (Wood et al., 2008; 2009). Profoundly grateful people possess a worldview in which everything they have—even life itself—is a gift. This level of appreciation for the good things in one's life may lead individuals to avoid taking benefits for granted (McCullough et al., 2002). As a result, they may be less prone to habituate to favorable life circumstances, which might also help to sustain their happiness and subjective wellbeing over time.

Finally, gratitude can invoke positive change by leading individuals to "broaden and build" their repertoire of thoughts and actions in ways that foster an "upward spiral toward optimal functioning" (Fredrickson, 2004, p. 153).

In their groundbreaking experimental study, Emmons and McCullough (2003) employed daily diary methods to demonstrate that those who write about things for which they are grateful report improved mood, coping behaviors, and physical health symptoms, consistent with research showing that gratitude also increases life satisfaction. Not surprisingly, the results of the "grateful" group were associated with higher levels of wellbeing. Specifically, the grateful group reported more favorable life satisfaction ratings, fewer symptoms of physical illness, and more helping behaviors relative to both the adversity and control groups.

Watkins and colleagues (2003) adopted a different approach to assessing a grateful disposition through the use of their own Gratitude Resentment and Appreciation Test (GRAT) rather than by the use of McCullough et al. (2002)'s extremely popular GQ-6 scale. In doing so, they found that subjects experience increases in positive affect when their gratitude is expressed, for example, through letter writing to someone to whom they are grateful, thinking about someone for whom they are grateful, or writing about a person that causes them to feel grateful. Another experiment by Watkins, Cruz, Holben, and Kolts (2008) further suggested that, by facilitating the closure of unpleasant memories, gratitude can lessen the intrusiveness of the emotional impact of these unpleasant memories. Using a similar design, Froh, Sefick, and Emmons (2008) have replicated the previous findings in a sample of youth and the benefits of gratitude were still observed 3 months after the gratitude intervention.

In a clinical setting, Hyland, Whalley, and Geraghty (2007) adopted a similar protocol and have found that "gratitude therapy" (keeping gratitude journals) is associated with sleep improvement, especially among those who score high on dispositional gratitude.

In yet another experiment, Seligman and colleagues (2005) placed subjects into one of three conditions, one of which was titled the "gratitude visit." The researchers found that, at the end of the week, subjects in this condition showed increases in happiness levels and decreases in depression levels. Further, the "gratitude visit" condition showed the highest levels of positive changes in the entire study with its strongest relation to life satisfaction.

In the past decade, the scientific study of gratitude in romantic relationships has uncovered that gratitude is advantageous for the wellbeing of romantic unions (e.g., Algoe, 2012, Barton & Nielsen, 2015). That is, relative to husbands and wives with lower gratitude levels, those with higher gratitude levels feel closer to their spouses, engage in more relationship maintenance behaviors, and have greater commitment, satisfaction, and stability (Algoe et al., 2010; Gordon, Impett, Kogan, Oveis, & Keltner, 2012; Kubacka et al., 2011; Mikulincer, Shaver, & Slav, 2006).

Along with these salutary effects of individuals' dispositional gratitude, a smaller body of research has begun to devote attention to receiving gratitude from one's spouse, that is, feeling appreciated (e.g., Joel, Gordon, Impett, MacDonald, & Keltner, 2013). An individual who expresses gratitude is not only providing a positive expression to his or her partner but is also conveying an acknowledgment of, and appreciation for, the partner. As such, gratitude may theoretically serve to strengthen marital happiness, intimacy, and support.

Research has suggested that grateful individuals have three main characteristics: a sense of abundance; an appreciation of the everyday pleasures in life; and an attitude of thankfulness toward the way other people promote their wellbeing (Watkins et al., 2003). As such, individuals also expend more effort in finding ways to benefit others when they feel that their actions will be met with gratitude from those whom they benefit (McCullough, Kilpatrick, et al., Please fix 2001). Thus, grateful individuals not only appreciate the role others play in their wellbeing but are also motivated by gratitude to make others happy.

McCullough, Kilpatrick, and colleagues (2001) have suggested that gratitude may be reinforcing. When one spouse expresses appreciation to the other, the positive feelings that result may reinforce those positive expressions, therefore facilitating more expressions of thankfulness from one spouse to the other.

Gordon and colleagues (Gordon, Arnette, & Smith, 2011) have examined the relations between gratitude and marital satisfaction at both the individual and couple levels. They were the first to make the distinction between feeling grateful (i.e., an individual's experience of feeling grateful himself or herself) and expressing gratitude (i.e., an individual's tendency to share his or her gratitude by expressing thanks to his or her spouse) toward examining the unique contributions of each on marital quality in long-term married couples. The researchers assigned couples to keep a diary of felt and expressed gratitude and relationship satisfaction for two weeks. Consistent with their hypotheses, they uncovered that one's felt and expressed gratitude is positively related to both one's own marital satisfaction and to one's spouse's marital satisfaction. These findings have suggested that someone who is expressing gratitude to a spouse is essentially celebrating the benefits that his or her spouse has brought to his or her life,

which leaves the spouse feeling understood, appreciated, and empowered (cf. Algoe et al., 2010, Lambert et al., 2010).

Appreciation has been listed as one of the most critical factors contributing to a satisfying marriage in long-term married couples (Sharlin, 1996), while not feeling loved and appreciated has been a top reason cited for divorce (Gigy & Kelly, 1992). Gordon et al. (2012) have found that individuals' sense of feeling appreciated by their spouses is associated with a greater appreciation for their partners, greater responsiveness to their partners' needs, and a greater desire to maintain the relationship.

Newly married couples have also been shown to benefit from expressing gratitude in their relationships because gratitude for one's partner is related to higher marital satisfaction and better adjustment (Schramm, Marshall, & Harris, 2005). Also among newlyweds, perceived positive behavior of a partner was found to be associated with greater gratitude toward that partner on a particular day (Mikulincer et al., 2006). For example, Murray, Holmes, and Griffin (2000) have found that married individuals who feel more appreciated by their spouses (i.e., believe that their partners rate them more positively on a variety of interpersonal traits) see their spouses in more positive lights (i.e., rate their partners more positively on the same traits). In another study by Murray, Holmes, Griffin, Bellavia, and Rose (2001), relative to people who report feeling less loved by their partners, those who report feeling more loved rate their partners more favorably. This effect was particularly pronounced for those who were married, providing evidence that these processes are essential in marital quality.

In Lambert et al.'s (2010) experiment, participants who expressed gratitude to their partners came to see their relationship as having greater communal strength than did control participants. As communal relationships are characterized by partners having less

of a focus on the costs and benefits of the relationship, negative partner behaviors are not expected to exert as strong an influence on subsequent appraisals of marital quality for those with higher levels of gratitude. Similarly, Gordon et al. (2012) have suggested that appreciative feelings shift people's focus from immediate self-interest toward broader considerations such as their spouse's needs in order to foster their own marital maintenance goals over the long term.

Kubacka et al. (2011) have argued that people who are more grateful for their partners engage in more relationship maintenance behaviors. Specific attention to gratitude in marriage has focused on the problem of domestic labor (e.g., Berger & Janoff-Bulman, 2006). For example, Klumb, Hoppmann, and Staats (2006) have found that German wives' reduction in marital satisfaction resulting from an unequal division of labor disappears after accounting for perceived gratitude for individual contributions.

Finally, Lambie and Marcel's (2002) theory of emotion awareness has bridged the areas of mindfulness and of gratitude. According to these researchers, gratitude leads to greater satisfaction only when an individual is aware of his or her gratitude because an individual is more likely to exhibit prototypical thoughts and actions elicited by specific inner states when he or she is aware of such states. From this perspective, gratitude may not always lead to greater marital satisfaction. Rather, greater awareness of one's inner state may be the key to evoking the positive function of gratitude to enhance life satisfaction. Given that mindfulness refers to the awareness of one's internal mind and external circumstances, it may be a catalyst for the expression of the effects of individuals' gratitude.

The Case for a Greek Sample

Since the 1960s, the structure of families has been experiencing significant changes in many Western industrialized societies (Yucel, 2015). Notably, marriage and fertility rates in Europe have declined dramatically. That is, the crude marriage rate (number of marriages per 1,000 people) fell from 7.8 in 1965 to 4.0 in 2015 while the current fertility rates in most European countries are well below the replacement level (Bongaarts, 2002). At the same time, the crude divorce rate (number of divorces per 1,000 people) has more than doubled, increasing from 0.8 in 1965 to 2.1 in 2016 (Eurostat, 2018). It also appears that cohabitation, consensual unions, single-parent households, non-marital births, and voluntary childlessness are rapidly emerging as powerful alternatives to “traditional” structures (Bumpass & Lu 2000).

The Greek nuclear family is displaying impressive resilience to these trends. Except for the decline in fertility rate that is among the lowest in Europe, that is, at 1.3 in 2015 (Eurostat, 2018), Greek families appear to be retaining their traditional structure by all other metrics. Greece by far has the lowest percentage of births outside of marriage in Europe at 7.0% (with the European average at 42.0%) as well as a healthy crude marriage rate at 4.6 and, by far, the lowest crude divorce rate in Europe at 1.0 for 2016 with the European average at 2.1 (Eurostat 2018).

It is worth considering why Greece is not following the patterns exhibited by most other European nations. Social anthropologists have long suggested that Greece, owing to the nation's "ambiguous cultural positioning vis-à-vis the West" (Paxson, 2002, p. 307), is often caught between the West and the East namely, between modernity and tradition (Georgas et al., 1997; Maratou, 1995; Paxson 2002, 2004). Based on their meta-analysis of European longitudinal studies on divorce, Wagner and Weiss (2006) have posited that

Greece belongs to a group of European countries that can be characterized as "traditional concerning the marriage culture" yet "modern concerning the socioeconomic development" (p. 493). Other European and American scholars have delighted in celebrating Greece's ancient past as the political and philosophical ancestor to the Enlightenment, while simultaneously denigrating the modern Greek nation-state as ever modernizing and held back by the lingering Eastern influence of Ottoman rule (Paxson 2002).

A crucial difference between Greece and "definitively" Western countries is the paramount importance of the extended family as a central institution for Greek society. Kinship in Greece has repeatedly been described as the most powerful entity of Greek culture (Georgas et al., 1997; Kataki, 1998; Loizos & Papataxiarchis, 1991; Zacharakis, Madianos, Papadimitriou, & Stefanis, 1998): an overwhelming 99.4 percent of Greek respondents placed the family as their top priority on the value scale, the highest percentage in the European Union (Georgas et al., 2001). Contrary to other European societies, such as the United Kingdom, Germany, and the Netherlands, regular Greek family relationships are composed of both intergenerational links and a vertical structure of uncles, aunts, and cousins (Kataki, 1998; Keller et al., 2003).

From a series of studies on cross-generational patterns of family functioning, Kataki (1998, 2002, 2012) has documented that the collectivist culture of the Greek family fosters closeness and feelings of connectedness among its members but fails to encourage independence and autonomy. This affects: the experience of infancy and childhood; individual roles, status, and identity; husband-wife relationships; parent-children interactions; and family social structure (Georgas, 2000; Likeridou, Hyrkas, Paunonen, & Lehti, 2001; Maridaki, 2000; Papaoikonomou, 2007). Against this

backdrop, the praises of full motherhood are sung. For example, Paxson (2004) has quoted a young Greek woman: "Beyond the feminist movements and all that, you cannot change your nature! The nature of a woman is to have children. The woman is only completed when she has a child" (p. 1) with spinsters in Greece seen as "social anomalies" (p. 3).

Marriage is still considered the highest obligation and duty in Greek culture. Even today, young Greeks still consider marriage as the most important goal in their lives (Ioannidi-Kapolou, 2004; Kantsa, 2014). Loizos and Papataxiarchis (1991) has proposed that one reason for this is that, for Greeks, marriage plays a crucial role in the definition of female and male identities, that is, women are perceived as "mothers," "homemakers," and "wives" while men are perceived as "breadwinners" and "fathers." "Full adult status for both men and women requires an indissoluble marriage, blessed with children" (Loizos, 1994, p. 67). Single motherhood is not a viable option as it directly contradicts the foundations of the dominant domestic model that requires marriage as a "precondition of procreation" (Papataxiarchis, 2012, p. 235).

Several additional explanations may be offered about why Greek marriages are much less likely to end in divorce. First, Greece is largely ethnically (94%) and religiously homogeneous (97% are Orthodox Christians). Numerous studies have indicated that divorce rates are lower among ethnically and religiously homogeneous marriages (homogamy) compared to ethnically mixed marriages (e.g., Brynin, Longhi, & Pérez, 2008; Jones, 1996; Smith, Maas, & Van Tubergen, 2012). Second, the Christian Orthodox faith treats the marital union as sacred and strongly discourages its dissolution (Zion, 1992). Third, ingrained gender inequalities in the Greek workplace (Mouriki, 2006; Symeonidou, 2002) together with the inaction of Greek family policy reinforce the

role of women as the sole caregivers of children and discourage mothers from actively pursuing careers after having children, thereby legitimizing their dependency on their husbands. Most Greek women eventually become stay-at-home mothers and Greece has by far the largest percentage of unemployed women in the Eurozone at 25.8% (Eurostat, 2018). Fourth, the informal institution of the extended family introduces a greater degree of stickiness to the marriage. For example, in-laws help the couple deal with everyday challenges such as finances and childcare. At the same time, in-laws will do everything and anything in their power to make the couple stay together, even if the couple is unhappy, if only for the sake of the children, and/or to avoid the social stigma of divorce.

Empirical researchers from all over the world have studied marital satisfaction extensively. There are now several truisms about marital satisfaction that have been replicated in study after study (e.g., couples with children exhibit lower marital satisfaction than couples without children, women are more likely to initiate divorce than are men, wives are unhappier in marriage than are their husbands). However, with relatively few exceptions, this work has only focused on "definitively" Western countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, and Canada. The above analysis has thereby suggested that Greece is in many ways different from most other countries in terms of the importance of family and its structure.

Thus, against this backdrop, the goal of this study is twofold. First, this study will test hypotheses about marital satisfaction that have been widely supported in previous research to investigate whether these hypotheses can be supported in modern-day Greece, thereby contributing to a perhaps universal understanding of the mechanisms of marital satisfaction in an under-researched, more traditional society. Second, the study will bridge together recent American research on mindfulness and gratitude to test whether

and how these two processes relate to marital satisfaction. Three separate, albeit related, research questions (and the rationale for their accompanying hypotheses) are as follow:

(a) What is the relationship between spouses' mindfulness and gratitude with respect to overall marital satisfaction?" It is expected that both mindfulness and gratitude will correlate strongly with marital satisfaction, that is, spouses who score high on mindfulness and spouses who score high in gratitude will also score higher in marital satisfaction.

(b) Which is a more useful predictor for marital quality: mindfulness or gratitude?" It is hypothesized that gratitude will be a better predictor of marital satisfaction because being able to feel grateful for the supportive and loving behavior of one's partner (gratitude) is more important than noticing it (mindfulness).

(c) What are the relations among mindfulness, gratitude, and marital satisfaction?" It is hypothesized that mindfulness will be a moderating variable that determines the effect of gratitude on marital satisfaction. That is, people who score higher on mindfulness are more likely to transfer their dispositional gratitude into higher marital satisfaction than those who are low in mindfulness.

In sum, it is expected that marital satisfaction for this sample, comprised of Greek couples, will operate similarly to those studies discussed in the previous section that relied predominantly on U.S. couples as the underlying processes of mindfulness and gratitude are similar across countries. On the other hand, it is expected that the additional qualitative data obtained through the survey will shed light on how the Greeks' experience of and action with respect to marriage are distinct.

Chapter II

Method

Greek heterosexual married couples were recruited to test: a) whether/how Greek marriages are different from U.S./Western European marriages; and b) whether self-reported mindfulness and gratitude are positively related to self-reported marital satisfaction. The study was designed to gather data from both husbands and wives to allow for the comparison of individual and cross-partner effects.

Participants

A sample of 335 Greek heterosexual, married participants aged 21-72 years was recruited. Eligibility requirements included that all participants be over 18 years of age (to understand the study protocol and provide informed consent), married, speak and read fluent Greek, and that both husbands and wives participated. Both spouses were required to have separate access to individual e-mail accounts for distribution of the study materials. Of the 335 participants, 89 were dropped as their spouses did not complete the survey. The final sample was, therefore, comprised of the remaining 123 couples ($N = 246$). Studies in this field have used similar, if somewhat smaller sample sizes. For example, Burpee and Langer, (2005) employed a sample of 95 participants; Stroud, Durbin, Seigal, and Knoblock (2010), who examined the relations among various personality traits and marital satisfaction, used a sample of 118 participants.

Participants were recruited through Facebook. Facebook was selected as it provides a number of tools that can be used to recruit diverse samples inexpensively,

helping to address a major challenge in social science, namely, its overreliance on relatively small, student, and disproportionately WEIRD –Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic—samples (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). While the Facebook population is not perfectly representative because its users tend to be younger and better educated than the general population, its sheer size implies that even underrepresented groups are relatively large (Kosinski, Matz, Gosling, Popov, & Stillwell, 2015).

Two approaches were simultaneously employed: snowball sampling on Facebook and Facebook ads. Snowball sampling was accomplished by posting the survey on Facebook and asking participants to share the post and invite their friends. Further, the last question of the survey asked participants to add e-mail addresses of people they thought might be interested in participating.

At the same time, Facebook ads were used to target eligible participants. Facebook ads as recruitment tools were selected for their low per-participant cost (Batterham, 2014) and their potential to target ads to the users most likely to be interested in and eligible for the advertised study. A handful of recent studies (Batterham, 2014; Carlini, Safioti, Rue, & Miles, 2014; Ramo & Prochaska, 2012) have exclusively relied on Facebook ads to recruit samples and has shown that Facebook advertising can help reduce the costs of targeted participant recruitment for online surveys. For this study, the cost of participants recruited from Facebook ads was \$.47 per participant. The reason the cost was significantly lower than other studies (e.g., Batterham, 2014, had a participant cost of \$1.51) is that Facebook ads are cheaper because competition for online advertising in Greece is significantly lower than in the U.S.

Tasks and Measures

The survey administered to participants was comprised of four parts. First, participants were required to answer demographic questions (age, gender, education, marriage duration, number of children, income, education, and employment status).

Marital Adjustment Test. The second part measured marital satisfaction. A standard self-report measure, the Locke and Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (MAT; Locke & Wallace, 1959) was used. The MAT consists of 15 items emphasizing agreement between spouses in various life domains and amount of leisure time spent together. Questions include: “State the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your mate on the following items: family finances/recreation/sexual relations/demonstration of affection/etc.” It is a widely used instrument that measures the couples’ accommodation to their partner at the time of administration. It has been used for more than 50 years and reportedly is highly reliable (reliability coefficient of 0.9) and internally consistent. Global scores range from 2 to 158 with higher scores reflecting better adjustment. MAT values can be used to stratify couples as *unusually satisfied* (130 to 158), *satisfied* (110 to 130), *average* (90 to 110), *dissatisfied* (70 to 90), or *very dissatisfied* (0 to 70) with their marriage (Monga, Alexandrescu, Katz, Stein, & Ganiats, 2004). Scoring followed the procedures described by Locke and Wallace (1959). In the present study, Cronbach’s alpha for men was 0.78, and for women it was 0.77. Men’s mean level of satisfaction was 119.5 (SD = 22.03) and women’s was 118.83 (SD = 21.5).

Langer Mindfulness Scale. The third part measured mindfulness using Langer’s Mindfulness Scale (LMS: Langer, 2004), the LMS-21. This task employs a 7-point Likert-type scale format (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) to allow participants to rate the degree to which they agree with such items as: “I get involved in almost

everything I do.” The LMS assesses four domains associated with mindful thinking: novelty seeking, engagement, novelty producing, and flexibility. Men’s mean mindfulness score was 114.6 and women’s was 114.6.

Gratitude Questionnaire-6 item (GQ-6). The final part measured gratitude using a combination of the GQ-6 scale (McCullough et al., 2002) and the Gratitude in Relationships Scale developed by Lambert et al. (2010). The GQ-6 is a short, self-report measure of dispositional gratitude (i.e., one’s proneness to experience gratitude). Participants answered 6 items on a 7-point Likert-type scale format (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) to allow participants to rate the degree to which they agree with such items as: “I have so much in life to be thankful for.” The GQ-6 has good internal reliability with reported Cronbach’s alphas between .82 and .87.

Gratitude in Relationships Scale. This 3-item scale was developed by Lambert et al. (2010) to measure how often participants feel grateful for their spouse (*felt gratitude*), how often they let their spouse know how much they value them (*expressed gratitude*), and how often their spouse let them know they value them (*received gratitude*) on a 7-point scale (from 1 = *never* to 7 = *very frequently*). The three measures were combined to form one major measure, “Spouse gratitude.” Each of the three subset measures (felt, expressed and received gratitude) served as secondary measures in the analyses.

Finally, an open-ended question was added at the end of the survey to enable participants to discuss aspects of their marriage that had not been included in previous sections of the survey. The question was: “Please add any other information about any other factors, besides those identified here, that are important to consider in assessing the success or non-success of your marriage.” The results of this section were content-

analyzed to obtain data on ways Greek marriages might be different from those in other countries.

Procedure

The author created a Facebook post describing the study that encouraged people to participate and share the study with their friends for a chance to win a EUR50 gift card for Greece's most popular e-retailer. At the same time, a paid Facebook advertisement asked people to participate in a survey about marital quality, also mentioning the drawing for three EUR50 gift cards. Upon agreeing to enroll in the study through either channel, each partner was e-mailed a unique link to a SurveyMonkey questionnaire administered online. SurveyMonkey is an online survey system, where the survey was hosted. Before anything else, participants were asked to sign the informed consent digitally. The informed consent explicitly stated that, to be eligible for the prize, both they and their spouses had to be willing to participate. After completing the 47-item survey, participants were asked for their spouse's e-mail address so SurveyMonkey would send their spouses a unique link to the survey, thus automatically matching the couples while reserving their anonymity.

The data, collected via Survey Monkey, were recorded responses from participants in a Microsoft Excel file. Data were then transferred from Microsoft Excel into the statistical software SPSS 16.1, for descriptive statistical analyses and for the Actor Partner Interdependence Model (APIM; Kashy & Kenny, 2000), a conceptual framework for collecting and analyzing dyadic data.

Chapter III

Results

Several statistical tests were performed to investigate the nature of the relations among mindfulness, gratitude, and marital satisfaction and, thus, to address slightly different questions. (a) The correlational analysis suggested that marital satisfaction strongly correlates with gratitude, but not with mindfulness. (b) The regression analysis sought to control for demographic variables (age, sex, income, number of children) to investigate whether the findings of the correlational analysis persisted. (c) The Actor Partner Interdependence Model analysis examined the effects of each spouse's characteristics on his or her own and on his or her partner's marital satisfaction. (d) The ANOVA divided participants into four groups of High/Low Mindfulness/Gratitude to examine whether people scoring High with both characteristics enjoyed the happiest marriages.

In an effort to assess mindfulness' usefulness for marital studies, two more analyses were performed: (e) the moderation analysis confirmed that mindfulness moderates the relationship between gratitude and marital satisfaction; and (f) the final ANOVA demonstrated that, while mindfulness does not directly correlate with marital satisfaction, it is a useful construct for researchers as it helps couples "remain on the same page" as far as their marriage is concerned. (g) Finally, the content analysis was performed to provide useful insights into understanding why some Greek couples were enjoying much happier marriages than others.

Demographic characteristics of the 246 participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 246)

Characteristic	N	%
Age (years)		
18-24	11	4.5
25-34	69	28.0
35-44	86	34.9
45-54	44	17.9
55-64	27	11.0
Over 65	9	3.6
Highest education completed		
High School	6	2.3
Professional School	11	4.3
Undergraduate Degree	66	27.0
Graduate Degree	143	58.3
Post-graduate Degree	20	8.0
Income (Euros)		
Less than 1,000	8	3.3
Less than 2,000	53	21.5
Less than 3,000	48	19.5
Less than 4,000	44	17.9
More than 4,000	62	25.2
Would rather not say	31	12.6
Duration of marriage (years)		
Less than 2	22	9.0
3-6	42	17.0
7-10	92	37.8
11-20	54	22.0
Over 21	36	14.2
Number of children		
0	34	13.9
1	87	35.3
2	114	46.4
3	9	3.7
4 or more	2	0.6

Figure 1 displays the marital satisfaction scores by gender using Monga and colleagues' (2004) stratification from *Very Dissatisfied* to *Unusually Satisfied*.

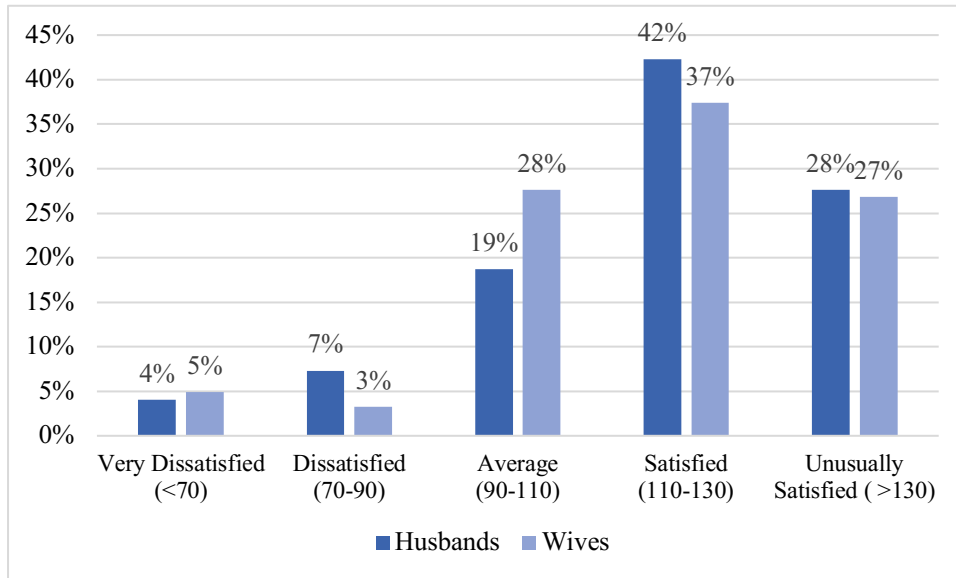


Figure 1. Marital Satisfaction by Gender

Marital Satisfaction, Mindfulness, Gratitude: Correlational Analysis

The first part of the analysis examined the relations among spouses' marital satisfaction, mindfulness, and gratitude scores (Table 2). Marital satisfaction scores of husbands and their wives exhibited a strong, positive, statistically significant correlation, $r(122) = .59, p < .001$. There was no significant mean difference in overall marital satisfaction between husbands ($M = 119.5, SD = 22.0$) and wives ($M = 118.8, SD = 21.6$); $t(243) = .270, p = .788$. There was no mean difference in self-reported overall mindfulness scores between husbands ($M = 114.6, SD = 14.0$) and wives ($M = 114.1, SD = 14.2$). However, husbands scored higher on one dimension of mindfulness, Novelty Producing ($M = 33.2, SD = 6.6$ for men, $M = 31.7, SD = 5.9$ for women). This difference was statistically significant, $F(1,244) = 3.11, p = .022$. There was also a statistically significant difference, $F(1,244) = 13.1, p < .001$ in self-reported gratitude, with women scoring higher than men ($M = 38.7, SD = 4.6$, and $M = 36.2, SD = 5.9$, respectively).

Table 2.

Mean Marital Satisfaction, Mindfulness, and Gratitude for Husbands and Wives

Scores	Husbands		Wives		Total	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Marital Satisfaction	119.5	22.03	118.8	21.57	119.2	21.76
Mindfulness	114.6	14.11	114.1	14.26	114.4	14.16
Gratitude	36.29**	5.86	38.7**	4.62	37.5	5.41

Note. ** $p < .01$

Further correlation analysis (Table 3) indicated that marital satisfaction was significantly and strongly correlated with gratitude ($r = .57, p < .001$) but not with mindfulness ($r = .04, ns$). Gratitude was also significantly correlated with mindfulness, albeit weakly ($r = .22, p < .05$). For wives, the correlation between gratitude and marital satisfaction was especially strong ($r = .67, p < .001$).

Table 3.

Correlation of Marital Satisfaction, Mindfulness, and Gratitude Scores

Scores	1	2	3
1. Marital Satisfaction	-		
2. Mindfulness	.04	-	
3. Gratitude	.57***	.22*	-

Note. * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$

Predicting Marital Satisfaction: A Multiple Regression Analysis

A three-block hierarchical multiple regression was used to establish that each of the two predictors (mindfulness, gratitude) is useful in predicting more of the variance of marital satisfaction. This step was required because mindfulness and gratitude correlated, albeit weakly (Table 3: $r = .22, p < .05$). In block 1, marital satisfaction scores were

regressed on demographic variables (gender, age, duration of marriage, number of children, household income). Gratitude scores were added to the regression in block 2 and mindfulness scores were added to the regression in block 3 (Table 4). Gratitude was added first because correlational analysis in the previous section indicated it might be more useful for predicting marital satisfaction than mindfulness.

Table 4.

Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Marital Satisfaction

Block and predictor variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Block 1				.05*	
Age	-.29	.22	-.12		
Sex	-1.81	2.79	-.04		
Duration of marriage	-2.01	1.53	-.11		
Number of children	-2.44	1.86	-.08		
Income	-.001	.001	-.152		
Block 2				.36***	.31***
Gratitude	2.70	.25	.57***		
Block 3				.37*	.01*
Mindfulness	.45	.21	.11*		

Note. * $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

In Block 1, five control variables were used to predict marital satisfaction and none of them was found to be significant. In Block 2, gratitude was added and was found to be statistically significant ($= .57, p < .001$) and to improve the model significantly ($\Delta R^2 = .31, p < .001$) by explaining an additional 31% of the variance in marital satisfaction. In Block 3, mindfulness was added and was found to be statistically significant ($b = .11, p = .034$) and to improve the model significantly ($\Delta R^2 = .01, p = .03$) by explaining an additional 1% of the variance in marital satisfaction. It is, therefore, suggested that gratitude and mindfulness are uniquely and significantly useful in explaining part of the variance in marital satisfaction.

The Mindful and the Grateful: An ANOVA Analysis

All participants were then divided into four groups (High Mindfulness /High Gratitude, High Mindfulness /Low Gratitude, Low Mindfulness /High Gratitude, Low Mindfulness/Low Gratitude) based on their self-reported mindfulness and gratitude scores. The cut-off score was based on the mean of each variable, that is, people who scored above the mean were placed in the High group and people who scored below the mean were placed in the Low Group. It was hypothesized that participants on the HM/HG would report significantly higher marital satisfaction scores than all the other groups and participants on the LM/LG group would report significantly lower marital satisfaction scores. A one-way ANOVA test was performed, followed up by a Tukey's post-hoc test.

Table 5.

One-Way ANOVA of Marital Satisfaction by Mindfulness/Gratitude Scores

Group	n	Mean	SD	Tukey's HSD Comparisons		
				HM/HG	HM/LG	LM/HG
HM/HG	96	123.7	19.44			
HM/LG	38	105.2	24.82	<.001***		
LM/HG	63	124.0	19.16	1.000	<.001***	
LM/LG	49	109.6	22.60	.016*	.763	.024*

Note. * $p < .05$ *** $p < .001$

The results of the analysis are showed in Fig. 2. The ANOVA only partially confirmed the hypothesis: while the HM/HG group did not have the highest mean marital satisfaction score, as expected the two groups with High Gratitude (HM/HG, LM/HG)

had significantly higher mean marital satisfaction scores than the two groups with Low Gratitude (HM/LG, LM/LG).

Figure 2. Marital Satisfaction Scores by Group for the four groups: High/Low Mindfulness/Gratitude

Dyadic Data Analysis

The data were then analyzed using a variation of the actor-partner interdependence model (APIM; Cook & Kenny, 2005). According to the APIM, there are actor effects, which refer to relations among variables for the same member of a dyad, and partner effects, which refer to relations among variables across members of a dyad. In the present study, for example, the association between husbands' traits and husbands' marital satisfaction scores would be considered an actor effect, whereas the association between husbands' traits and wives' marital satisfaction scores would be considered a

partner effect (Fig. 3). Four multiple regressions were performed, with the four dimensions of Langerian Mindfulness (Novelty Seeking, Flexibility, Engagement, and Novelty Producing), measured by the LMS, Trait Gratitude (measured by the GQ-6,) and Felt/Expressed/Received Gratitude, measured by the Gratitude in Relationships Scale as the independent variables and marital satisfaction as the dependent variable, for both husbands and wives.

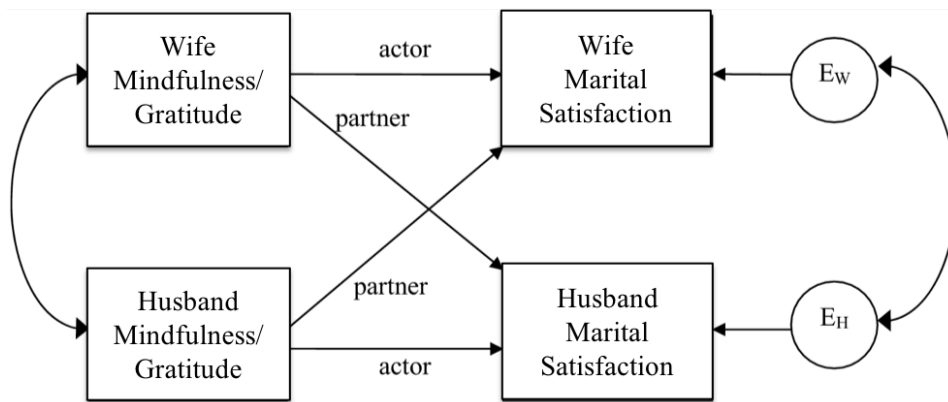


Figure 3. Path diagram of the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM)

As indicated in Table 6, all four models revealed statistically significant actor and partner effects between marital satisfaction and spouses' traits ($p < .001$ for all models, adjusted R^2 values ranging from .31 to .56). Based on this analysis, husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction behaves similarly; for both husbands and wives, marital satisfaction can be predicted by their own and their partner's Gratitude. Specifically, in all four models, the regression coefficients of Felt Gratitude ("I feel grateful for my spouse") and Received Gratitude ("My spouse often tells me they are grateful for having me") were statistically significant.

Table 6.

Actor & Partner effects of Mindfulness and Gratitude on Marital Satisfaction

Effects of Husbands' Traits	Actor Effects		Partner Effects	
Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>p</i>
H-Novelty Seeking	.072	.389	.030	.724
H-Flexibility	-.040	.621	-.058	.479
H-Engagement	.000	.998	-.071	.351
H-Novelty Producing	-.078	.345	-.053	.528
H-Trait Gratitude	.152*	.050	-.128	.097
H-Felt Gratitude	.383***	.000	.238**	.007
H-Expressed Gratitude	.135	.203	-.074	.493
H-Received Gratitude	.311**	.003	.553***	.000
R ²	.416		.392	
Adjusted R ²	.375		.349	
F (8,114)	0.143,		9.182	
	p < .001		p < .001	

Effects of Wives' Traits	Actor Effects		Partner Effects	
Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>p</i>
W-Novelty Seeking	-.028	.693	-.056	.535
W-Flexibility	-.077	.259	-.130	.126
W-Engagement	.040	.544	-.155	.062
W-Novelty Producing	.026	.723	.022	.811
W-Trait Gratitude	.082*	.013	.045	.580
W-Felt Gratitude	.488***	.000	.297**	.002
W-Expressed Gratitude	.040	.661	-.043	.711
W-Received Gratitude	.341***	.000	.374***	.000
R ²	.588		.356	
Adjusted R ²	.559		.311	
F(8,114)	20.361		7.885	
	p < .001		p < .001	

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Also, for both husbands and wives, their own Trait Gratitude (as measured by the GQ-6) was statistically significant for predicting their own marital satisfaction (but not their spouses'). None of the four mindfulness dimensions were found to be statistically significant for predicting marital satisfaction for either husbands or wives.

Moderation Analysis: Mindfulness as a Moderator of Gratitude

For this part of the analysis, an interaction term between mindfulness (high/low mindfulness - dummy variable) and gratitude was created to test whether mindfulness is moderating the effect of gratitude on marital satisfaction. The results of the analysis are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7.

Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Interaction between Mindfulness and Gratitude

Block and predictor variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Block 1				.24***	
Mindfulness	.072	.23	.02		
Gratitude	21.77	2.50	.49***		
Block 2				.25***	0.13*
Mindfulness	.56	.33	.14		
Gratitude	18.71	19.80	.42		
Mindfulness x Gratitude	.93	.45	.94*		

Note. * $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

The interaction term between mindfulness and gratitude was statistically significant ($b = .94, p < .05$) and explained an additional 1.3% of the variance in marital satisfaction. These findings support our hypothesis that the relationship between gratitude and marital satisfaction is strengthened by the presence of high mindfulness.

Mindless or Clueless: An ANOVA Analysis

For this part of the analysis, the difference between MAT scores of husbands and wives was calculated. The difference was calculated as follows: wife's MAT score was subtracted from husband's MAT score. Negative numbers indicate couples where the husband was less satisfied than his wife and positive numbers indicate couples where the husband was more satisfied than his wife.

The absolute difference ranged from 0 to 56 ($M=14.9$ and $SD = 13.7$) and 28 couples ($N=123$) exhibited differences larger than 20 points (Fig. 4). Such large differences point to couples that are largely out of sync with each other. It was hypothesized that people who scored more than 20 points higher than their spouse in the MAT, that is, people who were not aware that their spouse was a lot less satisfied than themselves would have lower self-reported mindfulness score in the LMS.

Figure 4. Differences in MAT scores (Husbands – Wives)

A new dummy variable, “Clueless” was introduced to describe this group of participants. The cut-off value of 20 MAT points was selected because for couples whose scores display differences larger than 20, by definition, husbands and wives would belong in different satisfaction groups (Figure 1). A one-way ANOVA test was performed to test whether Clueless participants had statistically different mean mindfulness scores from the rest. (Table 9).

Table 9.

Means with Confidence Intervals, Standard Deviations of Clueless participants

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>95% LL CI</i>	<i>95% UL CI</i>
Clueless	56	109.8	11.63	106.67	112.90
Non-clueless	190	115.6	13.6	113.52	117.41
Total	246	114.4	13.37	112.49	115.85

Results of ANOVA test for difference in the mean mindfulness score of clueless and non-clueless participants.

The one-way ANOVA confirmed the hypothesis that mean mindfulness scores of clueless participants were significantly lower than the mean mindfulness scores of the rest, $F(1, 244) = 8.02, p < .01$.

Content Analysis of Participants’ Open-ended Responses

The last part of the survey included an optional open-ended question, asking participants to discuss additional factors that were important for the success (or non-success) of their marriage. Of the 246 participants, an impressive 211 (85.7% of participants) responded to the optional question (90 men and 121 women).

For the purposes of the content analysis, participants who opted to respond were divided into three satisfaction groups based on their MAT score: Unusually satisfied

(MAT > 130, $N = 60$), Satisfied (MAT > 100 $N = 109$), and Dissatisfied (MAT < 100, $N = 42$). The results of the analysis brought to mind Tolstoy's famous aphorism: "All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way" (introduction to "Anna Karenina"). The responses of the Unusually Satisfied participants looked very homogeneous, taken straight out of a "How to Have a Happy Marriage" textbook: "love" (47 mentions), "mutual respect" (24 mentions), "mutual understanding" (21 mentions), "honesty" (15 mentions), "great communication" (14 mentions) and "being able to take one for the team" (11 mentions) were the most commonly cited factors. Sex, given its established importance for a happy marriage in the academic literature, and a 62.7% correlation ($p < .001$) with marital satisfaction in this sample, was mentioned fewer times than expected: responses like "great sex life," "sexual chemistry," and "intimacy" were mentioned only eight times (e.g., a 35-year-old husband wrote: "Our sex life is truly outstanding!"). The lack thereof was mentioned seven times, mostly by participants in the Unsatisfied group. One potential explanation for the low occurrence of sex-related responses in the open-ended question, however, may be that talking about what happens "στο κρεβάτι" (sic) (= in the bedroom) between a married couple is still considered somewhat taboo in Greek society.

In the second group, several other responses, more practical and more down-to-earth compared to the high ideals recorded in the first group, emerged. Two themes were of interest: the first theme included things the couple has in common, such as "compatible personalities" (22 mentions), "shared values" (15 mentions), and "common interests" (mentioned nine times). A second—very interesting, and very Greek—theme in the middle group was an almost perfect match between comments of husbands singing their wives' praises, saying that the most important thing for their happy marriage is "my

wonderful wife putting up with me” (5 instances) and their wives correspondingly mentioning “me, being able to make this marriage work” (4 instances). A 49-year-old wife wrote: “Two things keep this marriage together: a) my husband loves me way too much b) I have ENDLESS (sic) patience. Otherwise, I would have left him long ago.”

Another interesting pattern was that several participants (13 mentions) in this group responded something along the lines of “both of us are willing to put our children’s well-being first.” Consistent with Greeks’ renowned devotion to their children, the word “children” came up 52 times (almost one in four respondents) in total. Satisfied participants mentioned children in the context of how much they admire their partner as a parent and how much their children helped solidify the couple’s bond (e.g., a 41-year old husband said “[having kids] was the biggest challenge for our marriage, but it brought us closer together”), whereas dissatisfied participants made the division between the “pre”- and “post-children” era in their marriage. For example, a 42-old wife responded: “Ever since we had our son, our once wonderful marriage became impossible...”. As a matter of fact, one of the most common narratives in the dissatisfied group was that after having children, the couple transformed into something else, that did not include “being a couple.” A 34-year-old wife wrote: “Stress for finances and nagging for kids and housework; it is so easy for a couple to lose track of who they are after having children...”

In the same spirit, a surprising number of (mostly dissatisfied) participants mentioned the extended family as a factor (11 mentions). Several women complained of their husbands’ very close relationship with their mother (“My husband often compares me with his mother and always finds me lacking;” “I cannot stand how my mother-in-law has no boundaries and walks in and out of our house uninvited”). It is a pervasive

narrative for Greek families that Greek men “never leave their mothers.” Few men made similar remarks about their wives. A 39-year-old husband wrote: “The way her mother raised her has defined her adult behavior; she and I are too different to be able to create something healthy.” It is worth noting that, conversely, respondents from the Unusually Satisfied group mentioned something along the lines of “not letting the extended family meddle in our affairs” (3 mentions) or “having reliable help with childcare by grandparents” (2 mentions).

Respondents in the Dissatisfied group mentioned three kinds of factors to which they attribute their unsuccessful marriages: a) lack of physical, sexual, and emotional intimacy (it is worth noting that all women with MAT scores below 90 mentioned this), b) nagging and conflict about mundane things, such as housework (one 47-year-old wife wrote: “My mother-in-law has pampered my husband to the point he will never lift a finger to help me!” whereas a 40-year-old husband wrote “I can’t stand her nagging any longer”) and c) financial issues (mostly mentioned by husbands).

Chapter IV

Discussion

The purpose of this study was twofold: first, to investigate the relationship between Langerian mindfulness, gratitude, and marital satisfaction and second, to examine the notion of marriage and marital satisfaction in Greece, a population that has been systematically under-researched even though its features (e.g., extraordinarily low divorce rates) could be of empirical interest for marital research. This section will summarize findings and propose potential explanations to interpret them.

Marital Satisfaction

Given that Greece has, by far, the lowest crude divorce rate in the European Union at 1.0, it was expected that Greeks would report enjoying higher levels of marital satisfaction. Even though it is not always the case that the most dissatisfied couples are the ones that will eventually divorce, marital distress is the best predictor of divorce (e.g., Amato & Rogers, 1997) so it was expected that the low divorce rate would indicate lower marital distress.

The findings supported this expectation. The average MAT score for this study was extraordinarily high with similar scores for husbands and wives. Unsurprisingly, marital satisfaction scores of husbands and wives had a strong, positive, and statistically significant correlation. As seen in Figure 1, the vast majority of husbands and wives were either Satisfied or Unusually Satisfied with their marriage. The traditional cut-off point

for marital maladjustment (e.g., Gottman, 1994) is 100; only 15% of husbands and 25% of wives in our sample report MAT scores in the clinically distressed range.

In the recent marital research literature reviewed, average MAT scores ranged from 100.1 (Boston group, Maneta, Cohen, Shulz, & Waldinger, 2015) to 119.5 for the control group in the study of Monga et al. (2004). Other MAT scores reported in recent studies were 108.3 for husbands and 109.5 for wives (Gottman & Tabares, 2018). Tissot and colleagues have compared the average MAT scores in a U.S. and a Swiss sample (Tissot, Kuersten-Hogan, Frascarolo, Favez, & McHale, 2018) and have found that the Swiss sample reported significantly lower MAT scores than the U.S. sample. In the only recent study that focused on a non-Western, non-individualistic, Xu (2017) has reported that the average MAT score for Chinese newlyweds was 98.9, with almost half of participants falling below the 100-point mark. This short review of MAT scores places the MAT scores of the Greek sample in this study at the top, confirming our expectation that Greeks are more likely to report more satisfying marriages.

Mindfulness and Marital Satisfaction

Similarly to other studies focusing on Langerian mindfulness (e.g., Burpee & Langer, 2005), the mean mindfulness score for this sample was well above average with husbands and wives reporting similar scores. This occurred on all scores except for on the Novelty Producing dimension, that is, the degree to which one tends to produce new information on which husbands score slightly higher.

Many researchers and clinicians are interested in the role of mindfulness in positive marital functioning (e.g., Barnes et al. 2007; Kozlowski 2013; Wachs and Cordova 2007) and one particularly compelling and replicated finding in these studies

that consider mindfulness as a personality trait is that higher levels of dispositional mindfulness are strongly correlated with higher rates of marital satisfaction. Similarly, the present study hypothesized that higher levels of mindfulness would correlate with and predict higher marital satisfaction.

The analyses did not confirm this hypothesis, however. The correlational analysis (Table 3) indicated no significant relationship between mindfulness and marital satisfaction for either husbands or wives while the dyadic data analysis (Table 7) failed to find either actor or partner effects of dispositional mindfulness on either husbands' or wives' marital satisfaction. None of the four dimensions of mindfulness was a statistically significant predictor. The average MAT score of participants scoring High on Mindfulness but Low on Gratitude (HM/LG) was the lowest of the four groups that were included in the analysis. These findings are not consistent with past literature in which researchers (e.g., Baer, 2003; Barnes et al., 2007; Brown et al., 2007; Burpee & Langer, 2005; Carson, 2004; Dekeyser et al., 2008; Lenger et al., 2017; Wachs & Cordova, 2007) have consistently found mindfulness to be positively associated with relationship satisfaction.

One proposed explanation for this inconsistency is the difference in measurement techniques that might be influencing the results. As addressed previously in this thesis, mindfulness has been defined in a variety of ways and measured in a variety of ways as well; therefore, disparities between studies assessing mindfulness may result. For example, Barnes et al. (2007) found a positive and significant association between mindfulness and marital satisfaction by utilizing a dispositional version of the MAAS (Brown & Ryan, 2003) to measure trait mindfulness and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976) to assess marital satisfaction. The current study used the LMS (Langer,

2004) and the MAT (Locke & Wallace, 1959), respectively. The only other study reviewed that used the LMS is Burpee and Langer's research (2005) whose data suggested that mindful spouses, that is, people who are present-focused, mentally engaged, and open to new experiences, benefit from greater happiness in their marriages. It is worth noting however that, even in Burpee and Langer's study (2005), only two of the four dimensions (i.e., novelty producing, novelty seeking) demonstrated significant correlations with marital satisfaction.

Consistent with other research examining cross-partner effects of mindfulness on partner's marital satisfaction (e.g., Barnes et al. 2007; Lenger et al., 2017; Pakenham and Samios 2013), the present study did not uncover a statistically significant relationship between one's mindfulness and his or her spouse's marital satisfaction. This has suggested that trait mindfulness is not relevant to one's partner's happiness.

A unique contribution of this study is that related to its APIM-friendly design, it was able to compare the difference in MAT scores between husbands and wives (Fig. 4) and subsequently to examine the relations between this difference and mindfulness scores of the two spouses. It was hypothesized that participants whose score was more than 20 MAT points higher/lower than their spouse's would be scoring lower on the LMS, that is, would be more mindless. According to Langer (2000), mindlessness is the opposite of mindfulness (i.e., when we "act according to the sense our behavior made in the past, rather than the present"). This hypothesis was indeed confirmed. Mindless spouses were more likely than mindful spouses to be unaware of the extent of their spouses' unhappiness in their marriages.

Gratitude and Marital Satisfaction

Scholars have theorized that dispositional gratitude leads to greater marital satisfaction through a number of mechanisms: for example, husbands and wives with higher levels of gratitude have been found to feel closer to their spouses, engage in more relationship maintenance behaviors, and have greater commitment and stability (e.g., Algoe et al., 2010; Gordon et al., 2012; Kubacka et al., 2011; Mikulincer et al., 2006; Seligman et al., 2005). Building on this body of research, this study hypothesized that more grateful individuals would enjoy more satisfying marriages. Analysis after analysis, we found strong evidence supporting this hypothesis.

This study measured gratitude with a combination of the GQ-6 (McCullough et al., 2003), measuring Trait Gratitude and the Gratitude in Relationships Scale (Lambert et al., 2010), measuring what was named for the purposes of this study “Spouse-Related Gratitude.” Overall gratitude was the sum of these two variables. This study found a significant difference between husbands’ and wives’ scores with women more grateful than men overall. The correlational analysis found a strong, positive relationship between trait gratitude and marital satisfaction, suggesting that people who are more grateful tend to have more satisfying marriages. This effect was even more pronounced for women. According to the multiple regression analysis, gratitude scores were able to predict about one-third of the variance in marital satisfaction. The ANOVA found that people scoring High in trait gratitude displayed significantly higher mean MAT scores (in both the HM/HG group and the LM/HG group) than people scoring Low in trait gratitude.

The dyadic data analysis found significant actor and partner effects for Felt Gratitude and Received Gratitude for both husbands and wives as well as significant actor effects for Trait Gratitude. In other words, marital satisfaction for both husbands

and wives could be predicted not only by the amount of gratitude they felt for their partners and the extent to which they felt appreciated by their partners (actor effects) but also by how grateful their partners actually were and how much they themselves expressed their gratitude to their partners (partner effects). Also, for both husbands and wives, dispositional gratitude was significant in predicting their own marital satisfaction but not their partners', suggesting that how grateful one is may be relevant to one's own relationship experience but not to the partner's happiness. In sum, all of the tests that were performed suggested a strong positive association between gratitude and marital satisfaction.

Mindfulness, Gratitude, and Marital Satisfaction

Lambie and Marcel's (2002) theory of emotion awareness that proposes that gratitude can only lead to greater satisfaction if the individual is aware of their internal mind and external circumstances. It was therefore hypothesized that mindfulness would moderate the relationship between gratitude and marital satisfaction.

The results supported this hypothesis in that the interaction variable was statistically significant. As a result, it is proposed that mindfulness does moderate the relationship between gratitude and marital satisfaction such that the presence of high mindfulness will strengthen the relationship between gratitude and marital satisfaction. This study has relied on Lambie's (2007) theoretical framework of emotional awareness to interpret this moderating effect. Specifically, Lambie has proposed a concept involving levels of emotional awareness to explain individual differences in the awareness of emotion. At level zero, the "no emotion state," there is no evidence of emotion (e.g., bodily reactions, cognitive biases, verbal reports). Level one describes people who have

emotion states but no awareness of those. Finally, level two describes people who attend to an emotion state and categorize it as emotion. At this level, people exhibit deliberative behavior. According to this framework, it was reasoned that mindfulness enables individuals to promote their emotion awareness to level two.

By reaching level two emotion awareness, an individual embraces a core tenet of Langerian mindfulness, that is, active engagement in the present. In the context of a marriage, actively engaging with one's emotions, being able to feel less threatened by change, being aware of how grateful one is for one's spouse will help keep old relationships, new. (Burpee & Langer, 2005).

The Big, Fat, Greek Marriage

The previous section suggested that for the sample studied average MAT scores were higher than similar samples in the U.S., Switzerland, and China. This was an unsurprising finding given that Greece boasts the lowest crude divorce rate in Europe. It is worth wondering then, what makes Greeks happier in their marriages and less likely to divorce?

Several truisms about marriage were tested on this sample and were all found to hold. For example, Greek women were significantly more likely to respond that they have thought about getting a divorce compared to their husbands, consistent with the findings of similar studies (e.g., Amato, 2014). Participants with no children were significantly more likely to report higher marital satisfaction scores, consistent with similar studies (e.g., Burpee & Langer, 2005; Hirschberger et al., 2009). Income, education, and age did not correlate with marital satisfaction. Given that many Greek women do not work (either because of high unemployment in Greece or because Greek women are expected to stay

at home after they have children), another ANOVA was performed to compare marital satisfaction of working and unemployed women. No significant difference was found. In sum, none of the tests performed on this sample offered a convincing explanation as to why Greeks report higher levels of marital satisfaction.

The open-ended question at the end of the survey was aiming to collect responses that would shed light on this mystery. The majority of responses, however (e.g., love, children, family, intimacy, communication, companionship, mutual respect, compatibility, common interests) were not specific to a Greek context; these responses are essentially what a century of research on marital satisfaction would prescribe as the recipe to a great marriage.

It is worth noting, however, that there were three things that looked incompatible with marriages in more “Western” societies. The first, was the paramount importance of core and extended family for Greeks. Almost one out of four respondents spontaneously responded that “children” are what makes their marriage work while several respondents mentioned the extended family. At the onset of this study, it was mentioned that 99.4 percent of Greeks place their family as their top priority on the value scale, the highest percentage in the EU. The fact that several respondents spontaneously mentioned their in-laws in the open-ended question confirms the initial hypothesis that the presence of the extended family plays an important role in Greek marriage, either by introducing a greater degree of stickiness or by helping the couple deal with everyday challenges such as finances and childcare.

The second observation from the responses to the open-ended question was that a perverse “social contract” pattern came up: patient, benevolent, almost saintly wives that endure the whims of their husbands, who are indulged by their mothers. At a first reading,

this pattern was rather surprising; this idea came up several times in the responses with very similar wording. However, it became clear that this “social contract” is consistent with Greeks’ idea of what it means to be a man, that is, someone whose primary responsibility is to provide for and protect his family, and a woman, that is, someone who is responsible for literally everything else. It is often said that Greek men transition from being under their mothers’ care directly into being under their wives’ care – 51.6% of Greek men aged 20-34 still live with their parents (Eurostat, 2017).

Greek women are fully expected to do the all the housework (including taking care of the children and their husbands), regardless of their own or their husband’s employment status. Given that research has consistently found that the division of household labor is a prominent issue around which marital conflict develops (for a review, see Kluwer, Heesink, & Van de Vliert, 1996), it is worth wondering whether one reason Greeks seem to enjoy more satisfying marriages is that this issue is *a priori* resolved by society’s backward-looking expectations about gender roles.

The third observation was that none of the participants discussed their expectation for self-actualization through their marriage as an important factor for their marriage’s success. This is in sharp contrast to the U.S. where an increasing number of studies has attributed the increased rate of marital dissolution to a rising expectation for personal fulfillment from the marriage. According to these studies, the list of things people want from their spouses has grown substantially in recent decades and people have a lower threshold for marital dissatisfaction, making them more likely to seek a divorce if they feel their marriage is unfulfilling (e.g., Amato, 2000; Finkel, 2018; Hirschberger et al., 2009). For example, Finkel’s (2018) central thesis in “The All-or-Nothing Marriage” is that people nowadays have come to view marriage less as an essential institution and

more as an elective means of achieving self-discovery and personal growth, expecting their partner to be all things to them.

Based on the responses of participants, it appears that Greeks, unprogressive as they may be, have no such expectation from their spouses. Participants overwhelmingly attributed the success of their marriage to perceived mutual rewards (e.g., love, family, friendship, communication). Previti and Amato's (2003) 17-year longitudinal study established that individuals' reasons for staying together are specific to their particular marriages and the perceived rewards and/or barriers. Reporting "rewards only" for staying together was negatively correlated with divorce proneness. One possible explanation for the high average marital satisfaction of this sample (and the low occurrence of divorce in the Greek population) is that people overwhelmingly mentioned "rewards only" as reasons for staying with their spouses.

Conclusion

This study has found that gratitude is a much more useful construct than mindfulness for understanding marital happiness. McGill and colleagues' (2016) comprehensive review of all studies measuring the magnitude of the association between mindfulness and relationship satisfaction found only a small to moderate effect. This study failed to replicate this result, except for the hierarchical regression analysis that found a small effect. Otherwise, in analysis after analysis, the effect of mindfulness on marital satisfaction was non-significant.

However, even if mindfulness does not directly affect marital satisfaction, based on this study, there are at least two beneficial outcomes for more mindful spouses. First, higher mindfulness will strengthen the relationship between gratitude and marital

satisfaction, that is, people who are more grateful are likely to enjoy even more satisfying marriages if they are also mindful. Second, this study found that it is more likely for more mindful people (who, by Langer's definition, are more actively engaged in the present) to "stay on the same page" with their spouses about where their marriage is and where they want it to go. When relationships are held constant and ignore changing contexts, the possibility for conflict and unhappiness is likely to increase. It is often assumed that a marriage will stay stable because spouses really know their partners well. However, once their opinion is formed, there is a danger that this opinion will not change, even when situations and context change (Burpee & Langer, 2005). In contrast, mindful people hold more malleable beliefs and attitudes and tend to re-evaluate their spouses and rediscover them. These findings imply that mindfulness alone may not improve levels of marital satisfaction, but it may be linked through other variables that may explain the relationship; for example, spouses who are mentally engaged and aware of new contexts are more likely to enjoy happier and fulfilling marriages.

Both Trait and Spouse-Related Gratitude, on the other hand, were found to be strongly associated with marital satisfaction. Overall gratitude's correlation was very strong, especially for women, and explained one-third of the variance in marital satisfaction. Trait gratitude was found to predict marital satisfaction for both husbands and wives. This finding is consistent with other studies demonstrating that grateful individuals are more likely to experience higher levels of a number of different variables, including happiness, appreciation of the normal everyday pleasures in life, optimism, empathy, and a sense of abundance (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; McCullough et al., 2004; Watkins et al., 2003). Further, grateful people's attitude of thankfulness toward the

way other people promote their wellbeing (Watkins et al., 2003) is likely to create a virtuous circle of appreciation in the marriage.

In this study as expected, two dimensions of spouse-related gratitude, Felt Gratitude and Received Gratitude, were found to predict both own and spouse's marital satisfaction. Given that grateful individuals not only appreciate the role others play in their wellbeing but also are motivated by gratitude to make others happy, it becomes clear how gratitude is particularly relevant to marriage. Someone who is expressing gratitude to a spouse is essentially celebrating the benefits that his or her spouse has brought to his or her life, which leaves the spouse feeling understood, appreciated, and empowered, thereby sparking a virtuous circle of positive reciprocity within the marriage. Surprisingly, but in full accordance with similar studies, the third dimension of spouse-related gratitude, Expressed Gratitude, was not associated with the spouse's marital happiness. It is, therefore argued that having an inward experience of gratitude is more relevant to one's spouse's happiness than actually expressing gratitude outwardly.

In sum, this study provides additional documentation that gratitude, and to a lesser degree mindfulness, are both important personality traits that enhance marital quality. Understanding the mechanisms underlying this relationship should be of considerable interest to clinicians trying to develop interventions designed to assist couples in cultivating optimal relationship functioning.

With respect to the question of why Greeks seem to enjoy more satisfying marriages that are much less likely to end in divorce, the survey aspect of the study failed to identify potential convincing explanations. The content analysis of the open-ended question did yield some interesting findings, such as the role of the extended family in helping the couple stick together, stereotyped gender roles in division of household labor,

and not seeking self-actualization through the marriage. However, future research is needed to support these findings.

Limitations

Although the current research provides a valuable insight into the Greek marriage and the importance of spouses' positive personality traits for marital happiness, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. First and foremost, while the study did find a strong positive relationship between gratitude and marital satisfaction, the research is limited by its design. The data are cross-sectional; therefore, causal directions between gratitude and marital satisfaction cannot be inferred. Although a theoretical framework indicating how gratitude may contribute to more fulfilling marriages was offered, the inverse direction (i.e., that a happier marriage fosters greater gratitude on both individual and dyadic levels) may also be true. Future work should examine these constructs over time, ideally employing a longitudinal design, to substantiate the direction of this effect.

A second limitation that stems from the study's design is the nature of self-report questionnaires, which are less than ideal ways to measure personality traits and marital satisfaction due to their inherent bias, including but not limited to social desirability bias. Future research could incorporate methods such as observation to overcome these biases.

A final limitation of this study is the lack of diversity in the predominantly urban, affluent sample of well-educated Greek couples that resulted from snowball sampling. Almost two thirds of participants hold a graduate or post-graduate degree while just 42% of Greeks has attained tertiary education. Also, one third of participants claimed a monthly income greater than EUR 4.000, placing them in the highest 10%. It is worth noting, however, that the results of this study did not indicate a significant relationship

between either income or education and marital satisfaction. Future studies should be designed to examine how well these results generalize to more educationally and economically diverse populations.

Appendix

Survey Instrument

Below are some demographic questions. Please answer all the questions by ticking the appropriate box or filling in the gap.

- 1) What is your gender?
 - ☐ Male
 - ☐ Female
- 2) What is your age? _____ years old
- 3) What is your marital status?
 - ☐ Married or domestic partnership
 - ☐ Other _____
- 4) What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?
 - ☐ Some high school, no diploma
 - ☐ High school graduate
 - ☐ Some college credit, no degree
 - ☐ Bachelor's degree
 - ☐ Master's degree
 - ☐ Doctorate degree
 - ☐ Technical training
- 5) Are you currently...?
 - ☐ Employed for wages
 - ☐ Self-employed
 - ☐ Out of work
 - ☐ A homemaker
 - ☐ A student
 - ☐ Retired
- 6) What is the monthly income of your family?
 - ☐ Less than EUR 1,000
 - ☐ Less than EUR 2,000
 - ☐ Less than EUR 3,000
 - ☐ Less than EUR 4,000
 - ☐ More than EUR 4,000
 - ☐ Would rather not say

Below are some questions about your marriage. Please answer all the questions by ticking the appropriate box or filling in the gap.

- 7) How long have you and your spouse been married? _____ years
- 8) How many children do you and your spouse have? _____ children
- 9) Check the dot on the scale line below which best describes the degree of happiness, everything considered, of your present marriage. The middle point, "happy," represents the degree of happiness which most people get from marriage, and the scale gradually ranges on one side to those few who are very unhappy in marriage, and on the other, to those few who experience extreme joy or felicity in marriage.

<i>Very</i>						<i>Perfectly</i>
<i>Unhappy</i>				<i>Happy</i>		<i>Happy</i>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

- 10) State the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your mate on the following items.

	<i>Always Agree</i>	<i>Almost Always Agree</i>	<i>Occasionally Disagree</i>	<i>Frequently Disagree</i>	<i>Almost always Disagree</i>	<i>Always Disagree</i>
Handling family finances	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Matters of Recreation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Demonstration of Affection	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sex relations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Conventionality (right, good, proper conduct)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Philosophy of Life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ways of dealing with in-laws	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

- 11) When disagreements arise, they usually result in:
- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Husband giving in | Wife giving in | Mutual give and take |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
- 12) Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?
- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| All of them | Some of them | Very few of them | None of them |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
- 13) Do you ever wish you had not married?
- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Frequently | Occasionally | Rarely | Never |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

14) If you had your life to live over, do you think you would:

Marry the same
person

☐

Marry a different
person

☐

Not marry at all

☐

15) Do you confide in your mate?

Almost never

☐

Rarely

☐

In most things

☐

In everything

☐

Below are a number of personality traits that may or may not apply to you. Please tick the appropriate box to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that you see yourself as...

16) I like to investigate things.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

17) I generate few novel ideas.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

18) I am always open to new ways of doing things.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

19) I "get involved" in almost everything I do.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

20) I do not actively seek to learn new things.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

21) I make many novel contributions.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

22) I stay with the old tried and true ways of doing things.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

23) I seldom notice what other people are up to.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

24) I avoid thought-provoking conversations.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

25) I am very creative.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

26) I can behave in many different ways in a given situations.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

27) I attend to “the big picture”.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

28) I am very curious.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

29) I try to think of new ways of doing things.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

30) I am rarely aware of changes.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

31) I have an open mind about everything, even things that challenge my core beliefs.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

32) I like to be challenged intellectually.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

33) I find it easy to create new and effective ideas.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

34) I am rarely alert to new developments.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

35) I like to figure out how things work.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

36) I am not an original thinker.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

37) I have so much in life to be thankful for.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

38) If I had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

39) When I look at the world, I don't see much to be grateful for.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

40) I am grateful to a wide variety of people.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

41) As I get older, I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events, and situations that have been part of my life history.

*Strongly
Disagree*

1

☐

2

☐

3

☐

4

☐

5

☐

6

☐

*Strongly
Agree*

7

☐

42) Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful to something or someone.

*Strongly
Disagree*

*Strongly
Agree*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

43) I am not an original thinker

*Strongly
Disagree*

*Strongly
Agree*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

44) I am not an original thinker

*Strongly
Disagree*

*Strongly
Agree*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

45) I feel grateful for my spouse.

Never

*All the
time*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

46) I express my gratitude for the things that my spouse does for me

Never

Always

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

47) My spouse lets me know that he/she values me.

Never

*All the
time*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[illegible]

Please enter your spouse's email: _____

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