**Marriage Contract Paper**

***Things Learned About Partner***

I first met my partner, Rylee, during a Lambda Alpha Epsilon interesting meeting, which is an academic criminal justice fraternity on campus, in the spring of 2022. Now, a year and a half later, we are still close. We have a strong working relationship from LAE and a close friendship that has developed over time. From this friendship, it eventually became romantic, and we decided to get engaged and eventually married.

***Specific Disagreements***

While doing this marriage contract, Rylee and I encountered a few disagreements. The first disagreement was about our wedding budget. When first discussing an appropriate amount, I had originally said a much higher amount compared to Rylee’s original proposal. To come to an agreeable amount, we went over what we both thought were essential to our wedding and thought of cheaper alternatives. We eventually came to the agreement of $20,000 for the wedding budget. Before reaching this solution, I had felt fairly disappointed. Growing up, I have always imagined having this awesome, big wedding. However, after doing research for wedding expenses, it was a lot more than I thought. Rylee then explained to me that we can still have an incredible wedding but make cost-friendly choices. We eventually compromised after Rylee and I talked about cost effective options that will satisfy both our wants for the wedding. After finalizing the budget, I felt satisfied. I do not feel like either of us lost in our disagreement. We both were happy with our compromise. Our second disagreement was also related to the wedding planning as well. After discussing the budget, we shortly ran into a disagreement about wedding colors. Rylee originally wanted “earthy” tones for our color scheme while I proposed a more pastel color palette. We first discussed what we envisioned with our given colors and figured out a way to incorporate both ideal colors so one is not left unsatisfied. Durning this, I felt frustration if anything. I was not upset that we were having these issues, but I got frustrated because I had the “perfect” wedding image stuck in my head and I was failing to meet my goals but soon realized that it is not just my wedding, but both of ours. After self-reflection and Rylee proposing a way to incorporate both preferred wedding colors, we happily agreed upon our solution. I wanted to note that I am glad we had these disagreements early on because we were able to improve our communication and how to best work together throughout this contract. In an article by Sniezek, he stated, “Wedding planning may be the first major project the couple completes together. Wedding planning, which takes place before marriage, provides a view of the couple engaged in a major project before they have established the patterns of their division of labor” (2004). By planning this out first, then completing the other sections, we were able to solve our disagreements and figure out a method of communication on these major life decisions and goals for the future sections to come.

Lastly, another disagreement we encountered was about when to have a second child. I originally said I wanted to have our second child within three years of our first child. Rylee had suggested a period much longer than I had anticipated (I cannot remember what she exactly said). We both gave a strong rationale as to why we said the given amount of time. After a long discussion, we compromised and decided on a solution five years after our first birth. During our discussion of an appropriate time, I felt insecure. This is a big life decision and I felt like my rationale was invalid if my partner said something different. Rylee did a great job of making me still feel heard but still explaining why she thinks differently. After reaching our solution, I felt much better and confident.

***Overall Evaluation of the Contract***

I do not feel like there are any contradictions between different sections throughout these sections of the marriage contract. If anything, I think they correspond very well with each other. The way the assignment was given and assigned with different due dates as the sections went on was very beneficial. It ensured that the family plan sections were consistent with the goals. Rylee and I were constantly relating back to past sections or found ourselves alluding to the next section. A contradiction found within our contract, in terms to Rylee and I, is that we expressed multiple times our finances and how our goal is to make financially smart decisions but then in the family planning section, discussed how we want to send our children to private schools and hire addition help like nanny's. We realized this is an expensive decision but want to prioritize our children’s educational outcome.

I feel the practicality of our contract is very realistic. We really looked at and answered this contract as if we were really about to get married. We prioritized our careers and what each of us are actually capable of contributing to this marriage. The tasks and decisions we have set forth are efficient and highlight special talents, needs, and interests of both Rylee and me. I had set a goal to make sure Rylee felt heard and understood when she was giving her answers and suggestions. When it came to household tasks, for example, we consider who was good at what. I am familiar with cars, so I took on that role of car maintenance. I am not good at home repairs, but Rylee is, so she oversees those tasks. We both make up for where the other lacks. With this, if this contract was active in real life, I do think we would have any difficulty following it. Since we answered with such depth and a realistic mindset, I feel like I would follow the contract if it was real and legally binding. Sadly, I do not see myself and Rylee getting married in real life but what I had said in this contract, I have already previously discussed with my current partner or would make the same goals with them as well.

Overall, I think this marriage contract is very fair. I know you may not like this answer, but Rylee and I barely had any disagreements. We had great communication and had very similar mindsets on most sections of the contract. I do not think either of us ever really “gave in” on a decision. Most of the time, it was: “Omg, no way? Me too!”. To follow this, I felt like the equality of involvement in work and in decision making was disturbed very equally. I think this was crucial to finding this assignment enjoyable to do. We both contributed to each question and its rationale. I do not have any specific examples where the contract would be unfair to Rylee or me.

***Things Learned***

By doing this contract, I have learned a lot about my partner, Rylee. The most pleasant surprise was seeing how career driven she is. When it came to setting goals, planning for children, and even reasonable grounds for divorce, career aspects were always at play. I am not saying I did not think she was career driven at all, but talking about these goals through the marriage contract is not something that would have come up in our friendship dialogue. I also learned a lot about her family dynamics through the rationale proportion. Sadly, her parents are divorced and that has had an impact on her. We talked a lot about this throughout the contract because she used those experiences and incorporated them into the responses. I also learned a lot of small details about Rylee like how she rationalizes, how many children she wants, how she wants to have a baby (adoption), and likes and dislikes overall.

Some specific things I learned about myself and ideas about marriage are that, yes you can have a plan liked outlined, but through careful analyzing, realized, that the given plan can go off the train tracks very easily. When talking about lifelong commitments and planning, you have to consider every aspect. The good, the bad, and everything in between. While you may not have had us specifically write it all down, we still considered alternative options if plan A does not work out the way we expected. With this being said, I hope Rylee learned that I am a committed person who is open minded. I feel like I did a very good job, listening to and understanding Rylee. This aided in us being able to compromise and be satisfied with our answers.

If anyone knows me well, they know I cannot make decisions. This was a great experience for helping with that. While compromise is a solution, I realized I still had to be firm with my feelings and what I wanted. With these big life decisions and goals, there is no going with the flow. For a partnership to work, and be happy in terms of choices, both partners must express what exactly they want. Then evaluate which parts are negotiable and non-negotiable. I had to critically think about what I wanted and what would make me the happiest but what would also be satisfying to my partner. While communicating this, the decision of how to communicate came into play. I personally struggle communicating what I want with the fear of the person then becoming upset. I am what some would call a “people pleaser”. I will start out firm then eventually say the most satisfactory answer. However, having the mindset of being realistic for this contract and realizing the full effect of these decisions, I was able to get out what I wanted in this decision and not what I think Rylee wants me to say. This assignment has helped me improve important life-skills that will be applicable all throughout my life.

I have learned very much about marriage from this simulation. Two things that will stick with me are the motherhood wage penalty and how marriage is about the relationship between spouses. Firstly, the motherhood wage penalty made me really reconsider if I actually want children. Sadly, that should not be the case at all, but it is something as a woman I will be faced with. As I stated in the marriage contract, yes, money is important, and one must be stable enough to have a child due to the expenses, but I never thought I’d find myself thinking of it in terms of income decreasing. A 7% decrease in income per child is significant to one's income (Budig & England, 2001). Made me feel like I was almost disabled in a sense when that is not at all the case. Going back to the video we watched in class; I agree with the one lady when she said something similar too “becoming a working mother makes me work even harder because I have something to work for”. I was not aware of the pay gap between a man and women once they have children prior to our introduction to it in class. Secondly, I have come to learn that marriage is much more complex than I thought it was. Everyone has these preconceived ideas about what marriage should look like, but marriage is about the relationship between spouses (Thomas & Ryan, 2008). After finishing the last section, and thinking in a realistic way, Rylee and I would never have gotten to the end of the contract if we did not have a good relationship. Planning and making accomplishable goals and decisions require strong communication between partners.

**References**

[Budig & England (2001) - The Wage Penalty for Motherhood (1).pdf](file:///C%3A/Users/belle/Downloads/Budig%20%26%20England%20%282001%29%20-%20The%20Wage%20Penalty%20for%20Motherhood%20%281%29.pdf)

[Sniezek (2005) - Is It Our Day or the Bride’s Day\_ The Division of Wedding Labor and Its Meaning for Couples.pdf](file:///C%3A/Users/belle/Downloads/Sniezek%20%282005%29%20-%20Is%20It%20Our%20Day%20or%20the%20Bride%E2%80%99s%20Day_%20The%20Division%20of%20Wedding%20Labor%20and%20Its%20Meaning%20for%20Couples.pdf)

[Thomas & Ryan (2008) - Women's Perception of the Divorce Experience- A Qualitative Study.pdf](file:///C%3A/Users/belle/Downloads/Thomas%20%26%20Ryan%20%282008%29%20-%20Women%27s%20Perception%20of%20the%20Divorce%20Experience-%20A%20Qualitative%20Study.pdf)