

THE RELATIONSHIP OF CONFLICT TO THE
NEGOTIATION OF EMOTIONAL
CLOSENESS AND DISTANCE
IN MARRIAGE

By

MELISSA KAY GRIFFIN

Bachelor of Science

Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, Oklahoma

1997

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
December, 2000

THE RELATIONSHIP OF CONFLICT TO THE
NEGOTIATION OF EMOTIONAL
CLOSENESS AND DISTANCE
IN MARRIAGE

Thesis Approved:

Charles C. Hendrix

Thesis Adviser

Kathleen Briggs

Sam Loomis

Alfred L. Luzzi

Dean of the Graduate College

PREFACE

Conflict has been identified as a key factor in research on marital satisfaction as researchers and clinicians look for ways to strengthen and enrich marriages. As research on conflict resolution has evolved through the years, little has been done to integrate the areas of focus of the research. That is, research that involves the context of conflict, the perspectives of husbands and wives, and the process of conflict within marriages has, to this point been segregated and explored independently. Research is needed that explores how these key areas may impact one another in order to get a clearer understanding of what role that conflict plays in marital relationships. The current study is composed of an ongoing database of approximately 400 therapy cases from a marriage and family therapy training clinic with a COAMFTE approved master's degree program. The purpose of the study is to describe the relationship between conflict resolution and marital satisfaction in terms of how conflict may be used in marriages as a coping mechanism that helps to stabilize the negotiation of emotional closeness and distance between husbands and wives. That is, the study seeks to answer the question: If couples have the skills and resources for resolving their conflicts, what keeps them from doing so? Discovering an answer to this question may help therapists to provide more effective services to clients whose presenting problem is conflict in their marriage.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have many people to thank for their constant support and encouragement as I have worked and struggled with this thesis project. First, I would like to thank my husband Robert for his words of encouragement and motivation. His time management skills and patience have been of great value throughout my pursuit of higher education. I would also like to thank my parents Danny and Pam and my brother Jerod for supporting me and for understanding all of the times I was unable to come home.

Next, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Charles Hendrix who has served as my advisor, mentor, and friend throughout my experience at Oklahoma State University. Through his constant reminders of deadlines as well as his words of praise and at times much needed constructive criticism, I have been able to complete my goals of finishing this degree program. His faith in my abilities in academia and in practice provided the foundation upon which I have found stability when I doubted myself. The countless hours which he has devoted to my education and development as a therapist are greatly appreciated. He truly represents what I believe to be a great professor, teacher, and advisor.

I would also like to thank Dr. Kathleen Briggs for her sharp eye, insightful feedback, and her wealth of resources as I have worked on this project. I am thankful for her quick responses when I have asked for feedback and suggestions for this project. In addition, her positive outlook and words of

encouragement were always there just when I needed them. Lastly, I would like to thank Dr. David Fournier for all of his wisdom and expertise in statistical analysis and research methodology. I am very appreciative of the time Dr. Fournier took to sit and brainstorm about my project as he helped to make this thesis something that was doable. The structure he provided to help me to move from a theoretical understanding of conflict to application in research was the necessary key that I needed to complete my work. My three advisors are all too unrecognized for the efforts, devotion, and commitment that they have to higher education and to their students. I know that I am lucky to have studied and learned from three individuals who have so much knowledge and wisdom and who have brought so much change to my life on my quest to becoming a therapist.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	4
Integration of Research on Marital Conflict.....	4
Contextual Factors.....	4
Perspective Factors.....	10
Process Factors.....	15
Conceptual Framework.....	21
Conflict Theory.....	21
General Systems Theory.....	22
Integrative Model of Family Therapy.....	24
Hypotheses.....	29
Research Questions.....	33
III. METHODOLOGY.....	34
Research Design.....	34
Sampling.....	35
Instrumentation and Measurement.....	37
IV. RESULTS.....	43
V. DISCUSSION.....	64
Discussion.....	64
Implications.....	77
REFERENCES.....	81
APPENDIXES.....	88
APPENDIX A-Intake Form.....	88
APPENDIX B-Background Form.....	91
APPENDIX C-Couples Satisfaction, Adaptability and Cohesion Form.....	96
APPENDIX D-Diagnosis and Treatment Plan.....	99

APPENDIX E-Case Summary Form.....	101
APPENDIX F-Counseling Agreement.....	103
APPENDIX G-Institutional Review Board Consent.....	105

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Relationship Between Satisfaction with Closeness and Client's Perception of Seriousness of the Problem.....	44
Table 2	Four Quadrant Comparison of Gender Differences in Calling to Request Therapy	45
Table 3	Relationship between Satisfaction with Closeness in Marriage and Gender of Client.....	46
Table 4	Relationship between Perceived Seriousness of the Problem and Gender of Client.....	47
Table 5	Relationship between Likelihood of Problem to be Resolved and Gender of Client.....	47
Table 6	Four Quadrant Comparison of Satisfaction with Cohesion Between Husbands and Wives.....	48
Table 7	Results of Qualitative Analysis of Case Summaries for Case #1.....	51
Table 8	Results of Qualitative Analysis of Case Summaries for Case #2.....	52
Table 9	Results of Qualitative Analysis of Case Summaries for Case #3.....	53
Table 10	Results of Qualitative Analysis of Case Summaries for Case #4.....	54
Table 11	Results of Qualitative Analysis of Case Summaries for Case #5.....	55
Table 12	Identified Themes of Pursuing and Distancing From 5 Selected Cases.....	58

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Integrative Model of Family Therapy.....	24
Figure 2 Double ABCX Model of Family Crisis.....	25
Figure 3 Application of the Double ABCX Family Stress Model to Conflict.....	29

Chapter 1

Introduction

There has been extensive research and inquiry into the area of marital satisfaction in order to identify ways to strengthen and enrich marriages. Literature exists on many variables that have been identified as key features of marital satisfaction in an attempt to describe and to predict which marriages will most likely experience marital dissolution or divorce. One of these key factors that has been identified as having a significant relationship to marital satisfaction is conflict in marriages. There has been a shift in recent years in research on conflict in marriage from studying the content of the arguments couples have to *how* couples manage conflict (Kurdek, 1994; Markman, Renick, Floyd, Stanley, & Clements, 1993). The processes of conflict resolution, rather than the content is seen as important so that if couples have the skills, the belief is that they, with healthy processes, can face most any content issue (Christensen & Shenk, 1991). The patterns that emerge in relationships regarding conflict resolution are important not only in the maintenance of the relationship, but also in the overall stability of the relationship (Kurdek, 1994; Markman, et al., 1993). For some couples, conflict may play a role in relationship patterns in a way that maintains relationship stability or morphostasis (Dell, 1982). These patterns are so important to providing stability for couples that researchers and clinicians have found couples who do not readily give up the conflict in their relationship. Couples continue to hold on to conflict in their marriage though they report

wanting a better way to relate to each other and to find solutions to problems (Berns, Jacobson, & Gottman, 1999; Gottman, 1994).

In order to understand the relationship between conflict resolution and marital satisfaction, one must take into account the conflict resolution skills of the couple, the frequency or intensity of the arguments (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989), as well as the patterns that develop as a result of how couples manage conflict in their marital relationship. Keeping in mind that the relationship between conflict and marital satisfaction is complex, this study takes into consideration the important role that these underlying meanings have in how couples negotiate emotional closeness in their marriage. For the purpose of this study, emotional closeness will be defined by the level of cohesion that an individual reports having in their relationship as measures of cohesion that have been developed take into account qualities of emotional closeness in relationships (Olson, Sprenkle, & Russell, 1979). The study seeks to understand the function that conflict in marriage may serve in providing a sense of stability regarding emotional closeness. Using an integrative family therapy model based upon general systems theory and a crisis model to understand conflict as a coping mechanism facilitates therapists and other helping professionals in understanding how to intervene to provide new resources, new perspectives, and new coping strategies. These interventions may help couples to achieve a desired level of closeness (or a desired level of distance) in a more acceptable and often less tiring way (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; Piorkowski, 1994).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe the relationship between conflict and marital satisfaction in terms of how conflict may be used in marriages as a coping mechanism that helps to stabilize the negotiation of emotional closeness between husbands and wives. That is, this study seeks to answer the question: If couples have the skills and resources for resolving their conflicts, what keeps them from doing so?

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

In review of the literature that focuses on achieving a greater understanding of conflict resolution in marriage, there is much written on identifying what attributes of conflict can be changed in order to increase overall marital satisfaction. Previous research can be placed into categories that include the three features of the integrative model of family therapy context, perspective, and process (Hendrix, Briggs, & Fournier, 1999). More recently, there has been a movement toward a more interactive understanding of conflict resolution in couples. However, little has been done to integrate the three areas of context, perspective, and process in order to understand how these components fit together to contribute to the "stuckness" that couples often present in therapy. The following review of the literature attempts to organize research about marital conflict in a way that includes context, perspective, and process variables in order to demonstrate how intricate conflict can be in a relationship at multiple levels. Out of this history of literature about conflict in marriage hypotheses about the function of conflict in marriage have been developed that integrate the three and these hypotheses have attempted to describe how couples are in a sense immobilized in crisis.

Contextual Factors

The first category of variables to consider are contextual variables. These variables include the various demographics such as race, religion, and socioeconomic status that are unique to the couple (Hendrix, et al., 1999).

Context also includes the various resources or sources of support that a couple has. Key contextual factors that are explored in review of the literature as important pieces to understand and to build upon in order to help couples to improve their relationships are the impact of gender, the styles couples use to resolve conflict, and the communication or conflict resolution skills couples have to draw upon.

Gender Differences in Conflict and Closeness

Many studies have identified differences between men and women in various aspects of marital relationships. Differences in gender as a contextual factor deserves attention in order to understand the relationship that conflict resolution has to emotional closeness in marriages. Lillian Rubin (1983) proposed in her research that gender differences related to intimacy stem from the way men and women are socialized regarding intimacy. In addition, Rubin theorized that the change in the relationship with mother for boys has impacted their approach to intimacy in that they experience a separation from mother as they turn toward males for a way to identify themselves by their gender. Rubin explained that girls, however, do not experience this separation as they continue to identify with mother along gender lines. Some researchers pose that this socialization process is enforced throughout a lifetime by creating different “cultures” for men and women that include different value systems, different personality characteristics, different communication and problem-solving, assign different roles, and hold different expectations regarding relationships (Philpot, 1997; as cited in Heller & Wood, 1998).

Other researchers support the notion that men and women are socialized differently in the area of expression of intimacy. Markman, Stanley, and Blumberg (1994) propose men and women are no different emotionally; that both physically experience emotions, but men are taught to handle emotions differently than women. Their findings include that men have been socially trained to distance from intense feelings in favor of logic and reason that may appear to be "running away" to his female counterpart. The female partner then moves closer in attempt to get her needs met emotionally, and the pursuer/distancer pattern is then triggered.

Markman, Stanley, and Blumberg (1994) found that men tend to pursue most often through physical connection or shared activities such as sex, being in the same room together, sitting on the couch together, or playing a game or sport together. Women on the other hand tend to experience closeness through more verbal means (Cancian, 1986; Coontz, 1992; Markman, et al., 1994; Rubin, 1983; Berns, et al., 1999). Thus, the intimacy "dance" can be engaged as one person chooses to pursue connection in the way that they know how or the way that makes sense to them. They feel rejected when their partner "retreats" in favor of achieving intimacy through the means with which they are comfortable and familiar. For example, a husband pursues his wife physically, and his wife "retreats" by attempting to engage him in conversation. The wife then feels rejected when she sees her husband withdraw from her verbally in favor of another attempt to get close to her through some method of sharing in activity. Although the roles of the "pursuer" are changing in this scenario and each may

be pursuing at the same time in fact, the fears of abandonment as well as the fears of being smothered by their partner's method of getting closeness remain the same (Fogarty, 1978).

Typologies of Couples

One approach researchers have taken to describe, understand and relate conflict resolution to marital satisfaction is to develop typologies of couples in order to classify and to compare couples who were successful and unsuccessful in their marriages. A longitudinal study by John Gottman (1993) attempted to classify couples into five groups: Validating, volatile, avoiders, hostile, and hostile detached. The first three groups were identified as "stable" relationships that focused on primarily positive interaction that accompanied conflict if conflict were to occur. The latter two groups were identified as "unstable" groups as hostile behaviors were exhibited and couples in these groups experienced little positive interaction.

Further, the researcher found that the amount of arguing, particularly attempts to persuade one's partner, did not necessarily define a good marriage (Gottman, 1993; Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 1994). Findings from these studies indicate that volatile couples experience more intensity and argued much quicker and longer than did validating couples, and validating couples exhibited more intensity and more arguing than avoiding couples. Even though these couple types differed in degree and amount of arguing, research found that these couples displayed a ratio of five positive behaviors for every negative behavior whereas the hostile and hostile detached couples did not exhibit this ratio

(Gottman, 1994; Gottman, 1993). Therefore, the research supports the idea that there should be less emphasis placed on getting couples to validate more, having couples face conflicts more directly, and reducing intensity. The focus should be on working with each couple's style of managing conflict concentrating on how couples handle conflict in their relationship capitalizing on a couple's strengths rather than teaching them a new style. This would also include the idea that one should try to understand what function the conflict serves in the relationship rather than just removing or changing the conflict.

Another study attempted to classify couples based on their styles of conflict resolution. Kurdek (1994) poses that couples can be classified based on a self-report accompanied by a partner-report method of collecting data rather than coding observations of couples in a laboratory setting. Like Gottman's study, couples were classified into groups: Conflict engaging, problem solving, withdrawal, and compliance. The study found as hypothesized, high conflict engagement scores within the sample predicted relationship dissolution for both homosexual and heterosexual couples (Kurdek, 1994) unlike the findings about volatile couples in Gottman's research. One possible explanation for the differences found between the two studies is that Kurdek's research did not separate out what Gottman considers the "hostile" couples. High withdrawal scores on the inventory predicted relationship dissolution for husbands. Compliance scores, however, did not predict relationship dissolution. This is consistent with Gottman's findings on avoiding couples. Although the authors attempted to describe the process that individuals use to resolve conflict and

indicated the necessity of having resources to resolve conflict, the research does not take into consideration, although Gottman makes hints, the purpose conflict may serve in these relationships. In addition typology research does little to describe the type of changes in coping mechanisms these couples may have undergone or did not experience before they reached divorce.

Conflict Resolution Skills

There have been numerous studies that explore the importance of a couple having the skills to resolve conflict in minimizing marital distress and increasing overall marital satisfaction. There is research being done in the area of the effectiveness of training couples in managing conflict as a means to prevent marital distress (Markman, et al., 1993). Based upon the theory of marital distress that presents the idea that a couple's ability to "regulate negative emotions" is crucial to marital success, Markman and colleagues describe the importance of identifying destructive and constructive ways of managing conflict (1993, p. 70). A preventive intervention program was introduced to couples planning marriage. The researchers then compared these couples who received treatment to a control group of couples, and found that three years after the intervention, the experimental group of couples displayed higher levels of marital satisfaction and lower levels of instability than control couples. However, after a 5-year follow-up, researchers found that a number of members of the intervention group experienced a level of decline in that the only difference after the decline in the control group was men tended to use communication skills more in the intervention group, and there was a trend toward negative escalation in the

intervention group. The study found that there was a reduced tendency to use physical violence as a means to manage conflict within the intervention group, and intervention couples were less likely to end their relationships especially before marriage.

Research is finding couples that have the skills to resolve conflict are not using them even those couples who invest time in taking a workshop to learn conflict resolution (Burleson & Denton, 1997; Christensen & Shenk, 1991). Therefore, just having the skills may not be enough to be effective in resolving conflict. That is, without understanding how conflict fits into the context of a couple's relationship and without taking into account how satisfied a couple is with this aspect of the relationship, skills training may not a successful way to intervene (Christensen & Shenk, 1991;Gottman, 1994).

Perspective Factors

Perspective is another key area to consider as vital to helping couples to improve their relationships. Perspective can be defined as the individual beliefs that each person brings to the relationship system. This is a person's point of view or map of a situation which he or she may base his or her actions upon in trying meet one's personal needs in the relationship (Hendrix, et al., 1999; McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). Several factors that have been identified in the research that are key to understanding in order to develop a more integrative understanding of the role of conflict in relationships. These include perceived consensus on conflict and closeness in marriage, perceived power and control in the relationship, and perceived level of distress of the relationship.

Consensus on Conflict Resolution

A key factor in understanding the process of resolving conflict in marriage is recognizing each person's perception of the conflict as well as their perception of satisfaction with the way that conflict is resolved in his or her relationship. Research has found that couples who had a better understanding of each other experienced a more shared view and experience of intimacy or closeness in their marriage (Heller & Wood, 1998). In addition, couples report that when they achieve both understanding of their partner and feeling understood by their partner, they experience a greater level of shared intimacy (Heller & Wood, 1998). Conflict may then serve to compound the fears related to the level of closeness and distance that each member has if husband and/or wife are not feeling as if their perspective and needs for closeness and distance are understood.

Low marital satisfaction has been related to the level of agreement spouses have as to whether or not their disagreements can be settled (Crohan, 1992; Doherty, 1981a; Doherty, 1981b). Crohan (1992) further studied whether a discrepancy between individual beliefs about conflict resolution related to their marital satisfaction. Crohan proposed three questions to the sample: Is disagreement in marriage resolvable?, Should conflict be avoided?, and Is disagreement in marriage healthy? Crohan divided his sample into four groups that included both husbands and wives agreed, husbands agreed and wives disagreed, wives agreed and husbands disagreed, and both husbands and wives disagreed. Results indicated that for the first question, husbands and wives who

agreed that their conflicts were resolvable reported higher marital satisfaction than any other group. Results for the second question showed those husbands and wives who agreed that conflict should not be avoided reported greater marital satisfaction. In couples where one member expressed agreement to the question for avoiding conflict also reported lower marital satisfaction. This difference in perception can contribute to the pattern of pursuing and distancing that could be centered around resolving conflicts as a means for connection and distance. Thus, Crohan's study found that the discrepancy between partner's perceptions of conflict is negatively related to the couple's marital satisfaction.

Perceptions were also found to be important in a study by Acitelli, Douvan, and Veroff (1993) as they looked at similarities and level of understanding of conflict in the first year of marriage. The study found that spouses' perceptions of both their partner's and their own reactions to conflict in the first year of marriage positively correlated with how happy or satisfied husbands and wives reported being at the time. They proposed that difficulties in resolving conflicts were a result of husbands and wives attempting to resolve conflicts in different ways and misunderstanding or misinterpreting a spouse's intentions. Therefore, if a spouse interprets conflict as a move that is too close or too distant, the spouse may compensate for that move based on his or her interpretation and reaction to his or her fears (Fogarty, 1978; Piorkowski, 1994). In the first year study, the researchers found that perceived similarity is more strongly related to marital well being than actual similarity (Acitelli, et al., 1993). In a follow-up study that looked at the changes of perceptions of a period of three years, results

showed that not only were perceptions important, but that they tended to be stable over time (Acitelli, Douvan, & Veroff, 1997). This may be an important indicator in finding effective interventions in working with couples who present conflict as a problem in their marriage. That is, the underlying process of resolving conflicts that is based on each spouse's interpretation of the other's intention are developed early in relationships and may be more difficult to change as the couple experiences this process again and again in their relationship.

Perceived Power and Control in Relationships

In marital relationships, an important contributing factor to a couple's ability to resolve conflicts and achieve a desired level of closeness and distance is perceived power within the relationship. Ross (1991) describes marriage as a means to increase a person's sense of control through economic and social gains. However, marriage may also serve to limit control by decreasing personal autonomy, independence, and freedom (Ross, 1991). Perceived control plays an important role in understanding couples who are locked into a cycle of interaction. Michael White (1984) describes couples who are stuck in a pattern of interaction as individual's responding to their own perception that their partner, through his or her negative intention, is the *cause* of his or her discomfort. Thus, in a complementary relationship of pursuing and distancing, each partner in a sense has taken control of one aspect of closeness in their relationship so that the negotiation of closeness essentially becomes a power process for the couple (Cromwell & Olson, 1975; as cited in Babcock, Waltz, Jacobson, & Gottman, 1993).

The pursuer and the distancer create a balance in the relationship by controlling the closeness and distance aspect of intimacy respectively (Israelstam, 1989). However, since the distancer is in control of whether or not more closeness is achieved in the relationship by choosing not to engage and backing away, often couples enter therapy with the distancer identified in the "one up" power position. Pursuers may, in an attempt to move out of the "one down" position, increase the distancer's discomfort by threatening to leave the relationship. This is a period when a therapist may be called to intervene as the couple feels the pressures of oncoming change (White, 1984).

Conflict Resolution in Distressed and Nondistressed Couples

Communication patterns during conflict have been widely studied, and have primarily focused on the differences between couples under distress and those who are not. Satisfied couples offer more positive and less negative responses than dissatisfied couples (Gottman, 1979; Gottman, 1994). Supporting Gottman's notion of the ratio of positive and negative interactions, Margolina and Wampold (1981) found that when comparing distressed and nondistressed couples, nondistressed couples emitted significantly more positive verbal and nonverbal responses than did distressed couples. Another study by Cousins and Vincent (1983) found that during a transition to parenthood, satisfied couples used more supportive behaviors while dissatisfied couples showed more punitive behaviors one month after the birth of their first child. This is an indication that particularly during times of crisis including developmental transitions when pile-up of stress may be greater, the ability to resolve conflicts

and to connect in a positive way as perceived by both partners helps couples to more effectively manage stress (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983).

Process Factors

Process factors can be described as the underlying patterns that develop as persons in a relationship interact with one another (Hendrix, et al., 1999). These patterns that are formed are largely based upon a couple's context as well as the individual perspectives that each person brings to the interaction. As each person develops an interpretation of an action, they respond accordingly based upon that interpretation. What results is a circular pattern where no one event becomes the *cause* of another. Rather, each event builds upon and is related to others such that when couples report feeling "stuck", often a cycle of interaction can be identified. Process factors that have been identified in literature and in theoretical works include the relationship between conflict and emotional closeness, and what function a symptom may have in maintaining stability in relationships.

Conflict and Emotional Closeness

Another key area of research in conflict management that has attempted to go beyond the surface level content of arguments and skills a couple has to resolve conflicts is research that has attempted to understand the way conflict may regulate emotional closeness and distance in marriage. Thus, studies are taking into account that intimacy not only includes the closeness aspect between two people as they attempt to meet proximity and care giving needs, but also the aspect of distance that allows couples to achieve enough space to satisfy needs

for autonomy and personal growth (Israelstam, 1989). This pattern has been labeled the pursuer-distancer pattern, a demand-withdrawal pattern, and the rejection-intrusion pattern (Christensen & Shenk, 1991). One study found that there is a link between spouses' conflict resolution style in three categories, engagement, withdrawal, and compliance (Kurdek, 1995). Findings included the idea that low marital satisfaction tended to be associated with interactions between spouses where the wife frequently engaged in conflict and the husband withdrew.

Consistent with this study, findings from a study that compared nondistressed, clinical (couples in marital therapy), and divorcing couples indicated that nondistressed couples showed more mutually constructive communication than did the other two groups with clinical couples showing more than divorcing couples (Christensen & Shenk, 1991). Clinical and divorcing couples had a greater discrepancy in the desired level of closeness and independence than did nondistressed couples, and the greater the discrepancy, the more negative the interaction patterns were (Christensen & Shenk, 1991). This may indicate that when partners perceive themselves as being on opposing sides, having different goals in the relationship, they are less likely to feel satisfied in the relationship.

Another study by Heavey, Christensen, and Malamuth (1995) found that in a period of 2.5 years, demandingness as rated by observers showed a negative impact on relationship satisfaction at test time one and test time two. Demandingness was defined as engaging one's partner that is perceived in a

negative way. Ratings of withdrawal were also negatively associated with satisfaction, but were less significant. Studies in demandingness and withdrawal provide support that when a partner perceives their partner as moving too close or getting too distant, the experience contributes to the pile-up of stress created by the fears that needs for emotional closeness will not be met (Fogarty, 1978; McCubbin & Patterson, 1983).

Studies have also attempted to understand the relationship between conflict and closeness at a more extreme level where spousal abuse is occurring between husbands and wives. One study by Cook and Cook (1984) described battering couples as being locked into a complementary system where there is rigid control and little room for negotiation. That is, there is a rigid balance between the one-up position of the batterer and the one-down position of the victim. When this system is left alone, conflict can be avoided. However, the researchers found that when the system was challenged on a number of themes that would attempt to move the couple to a more equal symmetrical position, violence would erupt to bring the system back to the original position (Cook & Cook, 1984). Six themes of a complementary nature have been outlined that lead to conflict in the form of domestic violence when they are challenged. These include distance and intimacy, jealousy and loyalty, dependence and independence, rejection and unconditional acceptance, adequacy and inadequacy, control or power and powerlessness (Weitzman & Dreen, 1982). In this case, the conflict or battering is not necessarily the pile up of stressors, although battering can feed into the stress the couple is experiencing. The

underlying themes along with the feelings that are attached to these become the pile up that result in accessing a coping mechanism, or domestic violence. When one or both members move toward or away from their position around the theme of distance and intimacy and the move is a perceived threat to the fears that each member has about this theme, then action is taken to bring the system back to a comfortable level. Thus morphostasis is restored to the system without the couple ever addressing the issues that keep them stuck in this process (White, 1984).

Triangulation and Maintenance of Relationship Stability

The concept of the triangle that has been used to understand and to describe relationships and interactions in therapy is an important notion in understanding the function that conflict serves in marital relationships. Guerin, Fogarty, Fay, and Kautto (1996) propose that a relationship triangle is formed out of a response to the stress created by the natural tendency toward change and the need for stability or desire for homeostasis. Triangulation can be defined as "the movement between the dyad and a third party...it can split the dyad apart or draw the dyad closer" (James, 1989, p. 180). More recently, research and theory have focused on the structure of a triangle, and the movement within an activated triangle.

Thomas Fogarty (as cited in Guerin, et al., 1996) looked at the activation of and movement within a triangle based on individuals' needs for emotional closeness or distance. He proposed that the more anxiety a person feels in relation to one's needs for closeness or distance, the more likely a triangle will be

activated by a dyad in order to regulate the movement toward and away from one another (Guerin, 1996; Israelstam, 1989). Each partner is reacting to their fear that their partner's commitment to the relationship and acceptance of personal needs is less than their own commitment (James, 1989). Thus, when a pursuing member of a dyad experiences feelings of loneliness, rejection, and possibly abandonment, an attempt may be made in effort to move toward his or her partner out of response to these feelings. By the same token, when a distancing member experiences feelings of being smothered or overtaken at the expense of autonomy, an attempt may be made to move away from his or her partner out of response to these feelings (James, 1989).

Research has looked at a number of triangles in families and couple systems. Some of the most common triangle themes in research include the triangulation of a child into marital issues, the triangulation of another lover into the marriage, sibling triangles, multigenerational and in-law triangles, and even triangulation of alcohol into the marital system (Bepko & Krestan, 1985; James, 1989; Guerin, et al., 1996). All of these triangles that are identified, described, and worked with in therapy have the common theme in that they help to promote the "stuckness" that a couple or family feels. In addition, they serve to limit the options that a couple or family has to overcome issues (Guerin, et al., 1996; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). They serve to promote stability, consequently limiting growth of a relationship system by keeping the focus on the relationship of the triangled person or thing rather than addressing the issues between the members of the dyad.

To the extent that conflict is serving as a coping mechanism for the couple system to provide a sense of stability through their connection, conflict may then become the third point on the triangle that is activated when a husband or wife is feeling too close or too distant from his or her partner. Although space and independence are valued by individuals in marriage, partners tend to seek some degree of closeness in their relationship (Schneider, 1989). Guerin, Fogarty, Fay, and Kautto (1996) propose that there is no "right" amount of space between two people. More important is determining if the space created by the two people involved is "right" for them. Twosomes have to struggle to get close to this "right" amount of space with both people willing to compromise (Guerin, et al., 1996; Piorkowski, 1994). In order to achieve this compromise, the two people in the relationship must have achieved a level of independence and differentiation such that they are able to approach the relationship in a nonreactive way (Schnarch, 1991; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). This reactivity to the negotiation of this closeness is what may trigger the activation of a relationship triangle (Guerin, et al., 1996; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Thus patterns of conflict in the relationship may be maintained and promoted by the underlying patterns of pursuing and distancing (James, 1989). The focus on therapy, then is not to simply improve conflict resolution skills as another triangle may then be activated without addressing what the triangle is protecting within the system (first order change) (Guerin, et al., 1996; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Rather, if conflict is being used as a stabilizing factor in the relationship system, the focus of therapy or

intervention becomes the dyadic issues that have triggered the anxiety in one or both partners to activate the husband-wife-conflict triangle.

Conceptual Framework

The need for theory to guide research that attempts to understand the role of conflict in marriage is vital. In order to address limitations of previous research on conflict and to integrate the vast amount of information about conflict, theory that can address conflict at multiple levels is needed. Two theories that can best be used to understand how conflict serves as a function in marriage are Conflict Theory and General Systems Theory. Conflict theory serves as the basis for understanding conflict as a natural part of relationships (Farrington & Chertok, 1993). Second, General Systems Theory provides the foundation for understanding conflict at an interactional level. Specifically, an integrative model of family therapy (Hendrix, et al., 1999) is used from a systemic perspective to integrate information about conflict from contextual, individual perspective, and process components. In addition, a systemic understanding of the Double ABCX model of family stress (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; as cited in McCubbin & Patterson, 1983) is used to visually conceptualize the role that conflict plays in relationships.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory poses that conflict in relationships is inevitable and natural (Farrington & Chertok, 1993). Boss (1983) also reports in her work on normative crises that crisis is inherent with marriage as a normative stage in life. In

assuming that crisis is to be expected between people who share intense feelings and who are particularly close, conflict between two persons' aims are unavoidable (Rands, Levinger, & Mellinger, 1981). In addition, conflicts that do erupt can provide opportunity for the relationship to grow and evolve (change) if couples are satisfied with the results (Honeycut, Woods, & Fontenot, 1993). Although couples vary in the degree of satisfaction they experience in their marriage, the premises of conflict theory then provide the foundation for understanding the universality of studying conflict in intimate relationships.

General Systems Theory

Understanding conflict from a general systems theory perspective is also important in studying conflict within the context of marital relationships. "Systems thinking is a way of looking at the world in which objects are interrelated with one another" (Whitechurch & Constantine, 1993). A system can be defined as the "structural coupling of its components. The system is the way its components fit together" (Dell, 1985, p. 14). Based upon this coupling behavior, what results is a product of interactions between the members. That is, general systems theory embraces the idea of circular causality, which proposes that patterns of interaction or behavior in relation to others' actions is crucial to gathering meaning about behavior so that one can understand the mutuality of relationships. This perspective suggests that each person has a role in conflict (Fogarty, 1978; Kurdek, 1994) and proposes that conflict may, in turn, have a role in the relationship system. Closely related to this is the systems notion of nonsummativity which poses that the "whole is greater than the sum of the

[system's] parts" (Montgomery & Fewer, 1988). The relationship between two people in a marriage becomes a crucial piece to understanding the process of interaction that maintains the conflict in their relationship (Guerin, Fogarty, Fay, & Kautto, 1996). An understanding of relationships, then, is obtained from looking at the "big picture" that includes the complex network or system. This complex network system can be understood in terms of the interrelating parts that give information about the relationship system. These parts, context, perspective, and process, are the three components of an integrative model of family therapy that was developed in order to conceptualize and to facilitate change in therapy (Hendrix, et al., 1999) (see figure 1). Thus, the couple system is influenced by individual members and the perspectives they hold within a contextual framework that includes the characteristics such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, culture, and key issues of conflict that are unique to the couple's situation. Given the contextual setting and the similarities and/or differences in perspective, the individual members are influenced by the relationship system through the process of interaction with one another (Hendrix, et al., 1999).

Integrative Model of Family Therapy

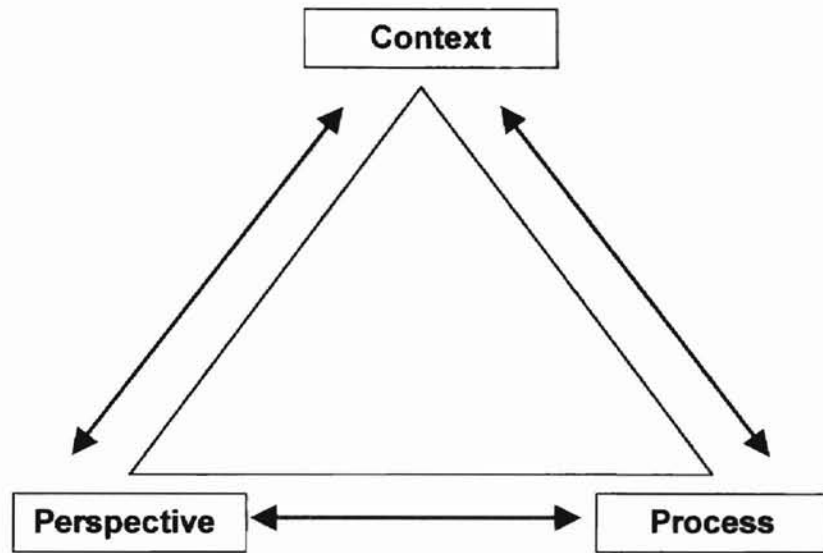


Figure 1

Double ABCX Model of Family Stress

Understanding conflict, then becomes more than focusing on the issues, the differences in perspectives, or the interchange between partners. Rather, in order to help couples achieve lasting change for their relationship, one should understand how conflict fits into the relationship puzzle. That is, what may be necessary is to view conflict as a component of the relationship that fulfills a need for the relationship. A helpful way to understand conflict as a coping mechanism is to apply the Double ABCX Crisis Model developed by McCubbin and Patterson (1983; as cited in McCubbin & Patterson, 1983) that takes into account the level of on-going stress, resources, and perception of stress that families experience (see figure 2). The Double ABCX Crisis Model of Family Stress is built upon Hill's 1949 ABCX model of family stress (as cited in McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). The model can be used to understand the relationship between the pile-

up of stressful events, what resources a family system has available to them, and how each person's perception contributes to the management of the pile-up of stress (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). Stressful events can be any demand for change that is placed on the system, whether the event be a crisis such as an unexpected death or a normative transition such as a child moving into adolescence (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). A combination of stressful events leads to pile-up (aA) on the model, and over time, a couple or family may find as the pile-up grows, their perception of the problem(s) (cC) changes as well as their ability to use new and existing resources (bB). The combination of the three pieces of the model leads an individual, couple, or family to identify a way to cope with the building stress as they attempt to adapt to their new circumstances.

Double ABCX Model of Family Crisis

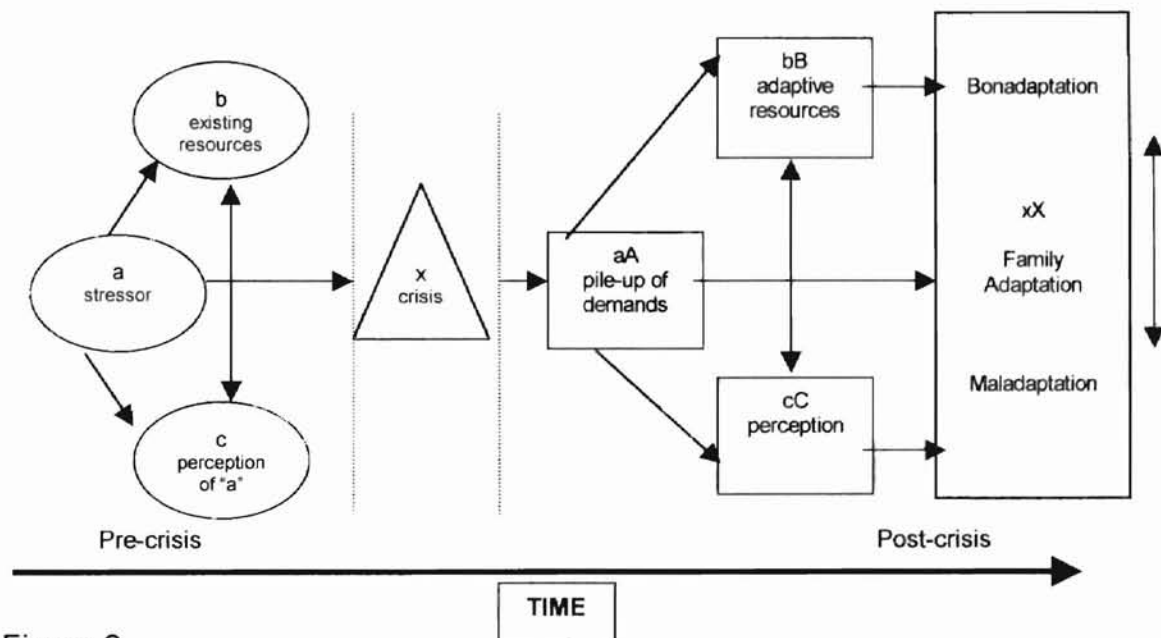


Figure 2.

This model can be coupled with a general systems theory understanding of relationships which poses that causality is circular rather than linear so that

each individual influences the relationship system and the relationship system, in turn, influences the individuals. One can see how the escalation or pile-up of conflicts that have an undercurrent of a demand and withdrawal pattern lead a couple to extreme beliefs that keep them locked into the positions they have taken (Fogarty, 1978). Couples who take these extreme positions are motivated by the fears that if they quit doing what they know to do in order to get their needs met regarding emotional closeness and distance, then they will allow their partner to either disappear completely (abandonment for pursuers) or swallow them up until they no longer have an individual identity (smothering for distancers) (Fogarty, 1978). This perspective is developed often over time as a pile-up of events has occurred. The husband's or wife's (or both) needs regarding emotional closeness have not been met, so they are left with needing a way to connect that prevents the pursuer from becoming too close and the distancer from drifting too far away.

What results is a "triangulation" of conflict into the relationship that functions to stabilize the relationship (Guerin, et al., 1996), and protects husband and wife from facing the fears that motivate their behaviors. In order to maintain a level of stability in a dyadic system, the couple brings in a third party in order to provide a balance for the system (Guerin, et al., 1996). Conflict becomes the ground on which the pursuer enters the ring for connection and the distancer's "flight" instinct is triggered so that he or she must move away to save him/herself. At the same token, the pursuer may move forward with such intense "force" in reaction to feelings of abandonment, that he or she increases the intensity to

keep the distancing partner engaged in the process. Thus, the couple is stuck moving through the process of the double ABCX model with no resolution. Adaptation and growth of the relationship is essentially blocked (Guerin, et al., 1996) so that the couple's solution for coping becomes part of the pile-up. The couple has essentially found a solution through conflict that they are using for different, if not opposite goals, one to engage and one to withdraw. What results is a more temporary solution through the triangulation of conflict that keeps the couple connected without resolution of the pile-up of fears that are related to the underlying theme of emotional closeness in the marital relationship (Guerin, et al., 1996) (see figure 3).

In essence, the couple has become immobilized and often even when new resources are presented such as new conflict resolution skills, fear prevents them from accessing these resources. That is resources have been provided to take away the coping mechanism without addressing the tension or crisis created by the fears that motivate the couple's behavior (Guerin, et al., 1996). Simply taking away the conflict would not achieve a desired level of lasting change that would truly lead to adaptation. Conflict must be replaced by another, more acceptable way of negotiating closeness that is something more than just a way to stay connected. To do this, the couple must be able to address the true pile-up that is being temporarily managed by conflict. That is, they must be able to face the issues and feelings between them without the use of the third leg of a triangle dealing directly with their dyadic relationship (Guerin, et al., 1996). Thus, the couple moves toward the end of the model towards bonadaptation where

they achieve a second order level of change that addresses the underlying issues of the fears that have kept them locked in their cycle of interaction. The other option, or out, from the cycle through the model is to move toward exhaustion, which in this case may be divorce. This part of the model becomes the "I give up" option that does not lead to adaptation for the relationship. Although there is an appearance that individuals may be moving toward change as the relationship dissolves and there is no longer a need for the coping mechanism as the relationship reaches an end point, the pile-up may be carried to future relationships, as individual fears have still not been addressed. Before couples reach this point, or afterwards if couples are interested in gaining insight into how their marriage dissolved, therapists and helping professionals are presented with a number of places in which they can intervene within the crisis model.

Application of the Double ABCX Family Stress Model to Conflict

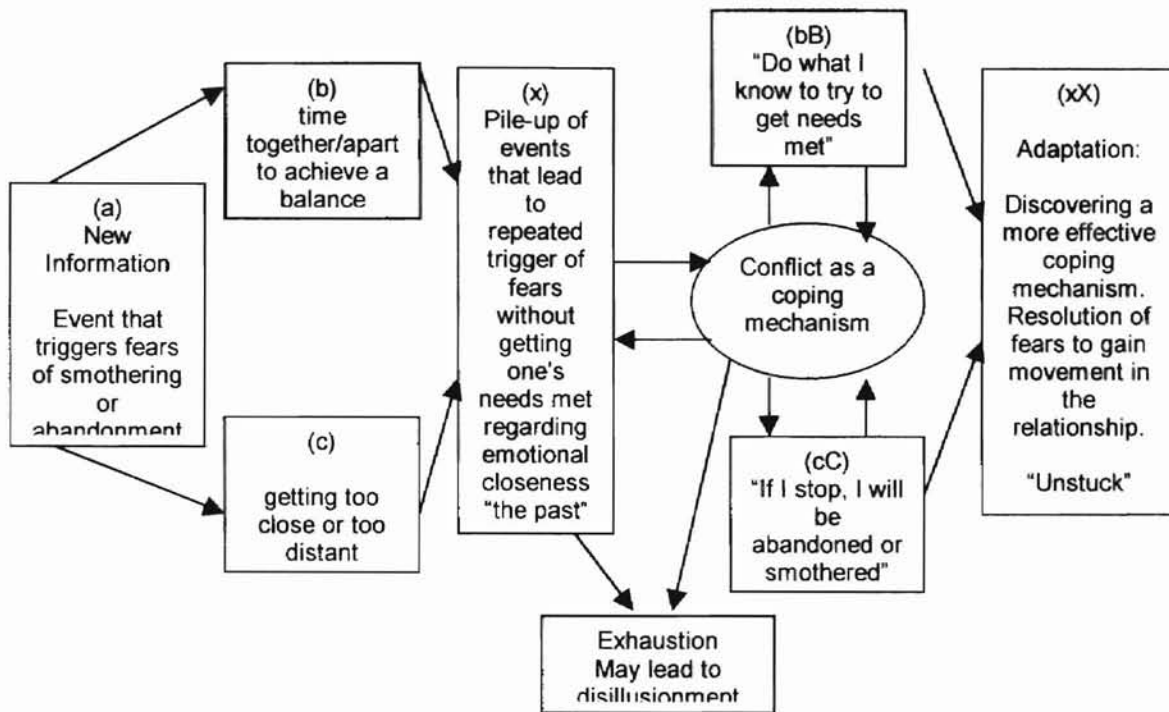


Figure 3.

Hypotheses

Based upon the notion from Conflict Theory that conflict is a natural and inevitable part of relationships that can lead to growth in marriage (Boss, 1983) and a General Systems Theory understanding that conflict can serve as a stabilizer, hypotheses have been developed in order to further describe the function that conflict has in relationships. These hypotheses attempt to address the problem identified through review of literature that understanding the relationship conflict has to satisfaction with emotional closeness without integrating contextual, perspective, and process factors may be inadequate.

In review of the literature, one can see that there is a tendency to make a simple link between communication/conflict resolution to marital satisfaction.

That is, researchers tend to pose that focusing on solving content issues, providing skills, or changing processes or patterns will affect marital satisfaction rather than integrating the three. However, some research has found that the link between communication including conflict resolution is not so simple (Burleson & Denton, 1997). The direction of the association between communication skills and marital satisfaction varied as one looked specifically at the skill examined and the level of distress the couple was experiencing at the time (Burleson & Denton, 1997). An assumption in conflict resolution research is often made that couples with fewer conflict management skills experience more distress than couples who have more of these skills. Rather, the negative intentions couples have toward each other have been found to be more significant (Burleson & Denton, 1997; Gottman, 1994). Therefore, one should pay attention to the context of the situation including the content of the arguments and the underlying meaning of the conflict in the marriage as well as to what specific skills the couple has (Burleson & Denton, 1997; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989). These underlying meanings incorporate such notions as the management or regulation of closeness and distance in marriages that has been associated with conflict resolution (Heavey, et al., 1995; Christensen & Shenk, 1991).

From a systemic perspective, what may be more important is to look at how the process of conflict resolution serves as a coping mechanism that allows the couple to negotiate the level of emotional closeness in their relationship. If a couple has the skills to manage conflict in their relationship and they are not

using them, then the conflict may be serving a function in their relationship. Rather than just simply making classifications about the style individual members of a couple use to resolve conflict, one should also take into account the effect of how satisfied a couple is with how they are resolving conflict in their marriage (Burleson & Denton, 1997; Christensen & Shenk, 1991) as well as how satisfied each is with the amount of closeness in the relationship. This notion contrasts with previous research in the area of conflict resolution in that researchers have made assumptions about which style of conflict resolution is better or more effective. For example, Gottman (1979) makes an assumption about the classifications of couples. He identified the best type of resolution to be compromise and the worst withdrawal. However, Gottman (1993) modified this assumption in his later work finding that engaging couples reported being satisfied in their marriage which was inconsistent with his previous descriptions of the "goodness" of each resolution style.

Individual differences in style and differences in perception of closeness in the relationship between husbands and wives is also an area that has been explored very little in research. Understanding these individual differences is necessary to understanding the complex relationship between conflict resolution and overall marital satisfaction because of the interdependent nature of relationships. That is, each member of a relationship is mutually influenced by the behavior of the other(s). The outcome of conflict resolution greatly depends on the interaction of individuals whose behaviors and one's perception of these behaviors influence each other (Whitechurch & Constantine, 1993). Based on

general systems theory and previous research that indicates a complex relationship between conflict resolution and marital satisfaction, the following hypotheses were developed:

Hypothesis 1.0: Couples who are more satisfied with the level of closeness in their relationship will perceive the conflict in their relationship as less serious than couples who are less satisfied with their closeness.

Hypothesis 2.0: Wives are more likely to be identified as pursuers as evidenced by the following:

- 2.1 Wives are more likely to call requesting therapy than husbands.
- 2.2 Wives are more likely to report greater dissatisfaction with closeness than husbands.
- 2.3 Wives are more likely to see the presenting problem as more serious than husbands.
- 2.4 Wives are more likely to see the presenting problem as less likely to be resolved than husbands.

Hypothesis 3.0: Husbands are more likely to be identified as distancers as evidenced by the following:

- 3.1 Husbands are more likely to report more satisfaction with lower levels of emotional closeness than wives.
- 3.2 Husbands are more likely to report coming to therapy at partner's request than wives.
- 3.3 Husbands are more likely to see the problem as less serious than wives.

3.4 Husbands are more likely to see the problem as more likely to be resolved than wives.

In an attempt to clarify and to operationalize the clinical experience in therapy of pursuing and distancing through conflict, the following research questions were developed. These questions are a component of a qualitative exploration of cases that have been identified to gain understanding through case examples in therapy.

Question 1: Do couples who are more extreme at pursuing and distancing use conflict to maintain stability or morphostasis?

Question 2: Are distancing behaviors of one's partner positively related to attempts to connect through conflict with one's partner?

Question 3: Are pursuing behaviors of one's partner positively related to attempts to distance from one's partner?

Chapter 3

Methods

The methods section of this study describes how information that may serve as evidence was gathered in order to test hypotheses developed out of a review of the literature and the exploration of theory. The research design is outlined and includes an explanation of the setting for the study as well as the choice of subjects. Sampling procedures are then defined and the sample obtained for the study is described. Finally, the instruments and procedures that were used in the study are described.

Research Design

The research method consists of a combination of a qualitative and quantitative research design. This method was selected as a means to describe *the relationship between conflict and the pursuing/distancing pattern* that couples experience as they manage the degree of emotional closeness in their relationship. The quantitative component of the study is included to describe the relationship of satisfaction with emotional closeness to level of perceived seriousness of conflict in the marital relationship. In addition, the hypotheses related to gender are included to establish consistency of this study with previous research.

The content analysis of the qualitative component of the study is included to answer a number of research questions related to the use of conflict in pattern of pursuing and distancing in marital relationships. Qualitative research is intended to systematically describe a situation factually and accurately (Isaac &

Michael, 1995). The questions included in the study are designed to describe a clinical observation of a process-level pattern analyzing the interrelationship between two types of behaviors as well as identification of stabilizing factors of these patterns.

Based on this method, the data collected as part of an ongoing process of record keeping of client characteristics was selected from existing client records in a university based Marriage and Family Therapy program. Previously collected data from the forms and questionnaires that the clients completed at intake were used to test the first three hypotheses in the study. In addition, the content of session summaries was reviewed in order to identify key variables that clients describe as part of their relationship related to pursuing and distancing, conflict resolution, and satisfaction in their marriage. The information collected from the session summaries was used to answer the questions proposed in the qualitative part of the study in order to further describe the relationship of conflict to emotional closeness in marriage in an attempt to provide case examples to the theory proposed.

Sampling

The target population for the study was clients who were seeking mental health services specifically for marital therapy. The sampling frame was the couples receiving services in a marriage and family therapy clinic in a medium-sized south-central state university during the period from 1993 to 1998. The total number of cases that are available to be included in the sample is approximately 419 with 237 of these cases involving couples therapy, thus

eliminating the cases that involved individual and family therapy. The sampling procedure is purposive as cases were selected from a unique population that presented a particular problem in therapy. The sampling procedure is also secondary analysis in that records used in the study were from those who sought services at a specific clinic during the specified time. As the study is descriptive in nature, one limitation may be that the sample population may or may not represent other geographical areas where couples seek services for marital therapy or couples in general who are not seeking therapy.

In order to complete the qualitative component of the research, the 237 cases involving couples therapy were further assessed for fit for the study to obtain a smaller sample size that can be used to answer the descriptive questions about the role that conflict plays in how couples negotiate emotional closeness and distance in their relationships. The goal of qualitative research is to describe a phenomena accurately. That is, the purpose of this type of research is not to test hypotheses or make predictions about behaviors. By obtaining information from selected case studies, the focus is to further describe the process of pursuing and distancing that is often identified in marital therapy in an attempt to improve the quality and "fit" of interventions used in therapy to help couples improve satisfaction in relationships.

Specific criteria were used to narrow the sample. The criteria included 1) couples who are married, 2) who indicated marital conflict as a presenting problem on the background information form, 3) who attended therapy for at least three sessions, and 4) there is a description of a pursuing and distancing pattern

of interaction in the session summaries written by the therapist assigned to the case. Additional narrowing factors were used to further reduce the sample size to a more manageable number of cases. These included selecting married couples who had attended at least five sessions and had completed therapy as indicated on the termination summary in the file which resulted in the selection of five cases that met all of the criteria. Content analysis of the session summaries was then conducted and observations were coded for descriptions of behaviors that indicated pursuing, for behaviors that indicated distancing, and for areas of conflict that were selected prior to analysis as the areas of interest pertaining to the purpose of the study. Repeat pursuing behaviors, distancing behaviors, and areas of conflict were tallied such that each time a behavior was observed, the behavior was put in a column for the pattern (pursuing, distancing, and conflict) that described the behavior. Behaviors were also noted to indicate whether husband, wife, or therapist made the observation, action, or description. A tally sheet was developed for each individual file that included a column of pursuing behaviors, a column of distancing behaviors, and a column of conflicts that were brought up by the couple as issues in their marriage. The tally sheets were then used as the data source used to look for patterns within individual cases as well as across cases.

Instrumentation and Measurement

Telephone intake form. The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship that conflict has to how couples negotiate emotional closeness in their marriages. Based upon the review of literature about conflict, closeness,

and gender, the telephone intake form provided the information to test the hypothesis regarding the roles that men and women assume in pursuing and distancing relationships. The telephone intake form has a place to note who made the call for therapy. In addition, the telephone intake form is the first place that the presenting problem is described. For the qualitative component of this research, the description of the presenting problem as well as who is attending therapy on the telephone intake form can help to screen out cases that are not a fit for the study.

Background questionnaire. The background questionnaire includes information about the demographics of clients as well as information about the presenting problem from each person's perspective who is attending therapy. This form provides the data concerning the seriousness of the problem and the likelihood that the client sees the problem to be resolved. Attitude about the seriousness of the problem states "How serious would you say this problem is right now?" The subject indicated a response to this question by circling one of four possible answers, 1) Not at All Serious, 2) Slightly Serious, 3) Moderately Serious, and 4) Very Serious. The seriousness of the problem is then coded based upon the scale above. Attitude about the likelihood that the problem will be resolved states "How likely do you think the problem is to change?" The subject indicated a response to this question by circling one of four possible answers that includes 1) Not at All Likely, 2) Slightly Likely, 3) Moderately Likely, and 4) Very Likely. These items as well as the definition of the presenting problem apply specifically in looking at differences in gender in pursuing and distancing.

In addition, the background form provides space for the client to relate their definition of the problem, to check presenting problems that apply to them provided in a list that includes marital conflict, and what the client hopes to gain from services. Clients can also indicate who referred them for services. From the clients' answers to these questions, information was provided related to the role of conflict as husbands and wives negotiate closeness in marriage specifically related to hypotheses about trends of pursuing and distancing by gender. The item checklist and definition of the problem was also used to review case files and narrow the sample size to a smaller number to complete the qualitative component of the study as marital conflict as a presenting problem is one of the key factors used to select cases to use to answer the qualitative questions.

FACES III and Satisfaction Scales.

This study used the FACES III, communication and satisfaction scales to examine the relationship that satisfaction with closeness and satisfaction with conflict resolution has according to husbands' and wives' perceptions of their marriage. FACES III is used to obtain a perceived level of cohesion from both husbands and wives as they begin therapy. The questionnaires were administered prior to beginning the first session and again at every seventh session to note changes as therapy progressed. Clients were instructed to fill out the paperwork separately while sitting in the waiting room with the therapist watching the completion of the paperwork from behind a one-way mirror. Clients were given as much time as they needed to complete the questionnaires. These

instruments provided information about concepts that are unique to relationships, but they were measured at the individual level as the answers were based upon each member of the couple's perspective of the relationship.

Cohesion and Flexibility. FACES III (Olson, 1991) was used to assess cohesion and flexibility dimensions of relationships. A score regarding a client's perception of the amount of cohesion (closeness) that exists in the marriage was obtained at the initiation of therapy. The measure of cohesion is plotted on a scale ranging from one extreme to another with the middle range representing balanced functioning (Olson, Sprenkle, & Russell, 1979). This study takes into account where a client perceives his or her relationship to be on the cohesion scale as well as indications from the description of the presenting problem and satisfaction with closeness. As mentioned in review of literature, what may be important is the individual's satisfaction with the degree of closeness and distance in the relationship (Christensen & Shenk, 1991).

Satisfaction. The Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems that describes cohesion and flexibility, also includes the dimensions of communication and satisfaction (Olson, 1991). Satisfaction in relationships is important as Olson (1991) states that family functioning can be measured by how satisfied a person is with their relationship specifically related to cohesion and adaptability.

The satisfaction scale a component of the communication and satisfaction scale based upon the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems (Olson, 1991) is a ten item measure scored on a likert-type scale ranging from 1=almost

never to 5=very often, as is used in the FACES III questionnaire that is developed for couples by Olson, Fournier, and Druckman,(1987). This scale is concerned with the attitude that a person has regarding his or her feelings of satisfaction that he or she gets in the marital relationship (Olson, Fournier, & Druckman, 1987). That is, the satisfaction scale assesses the degree of happiness or contentment with current levels of cohesion and satisfaction that one feels in his or her marital relationship. Olson (1991) identifies satisfaction with these two areas as an important indicator of overall relationship functioning. High scores on the scale indicate that the subject is generally pleased with his or her relationship, while low scores indicate that there is dissatisfaction in areas within the relationship. Items within the satisfaction scale are reverse scored so that, when items are calculated, high scores suggest a greater degree of satisfaction (Olson, Fournier, & Druckman, 1987). Items from the satisfaction scale were used to test hypotheses related to satisfaction with closeness in their relationship as well as satisfaction with the ways that the couple resolves conflicts (Hypothesis 1.0).

Treatment Plan and Diagnosis. The treatment plan and diagnosis form is completed after the third session of therapy by the therapist assigned to the case. This form provides information regarding the diagnosis given to the individual(s) who are receiving services as well as a description of the goals of therapy and the treatment plan that is used to address the goals. The diagnosis involves giving a description of the diagnosis based upon axes one through five outlined in the DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). In narrowing

the sample size for analysis of the qualitative component of the study, clients will have completed at least three sessions so that a treatment plan exists for the case. For the qualitative piece of the study, the details of the treatment plan were used to determine what the focus of therapy is related to marital issues in order to select therapy cases and also to provide information regarding the existence of a pursuing and distancing pattern of interaction in marriage.

Session Summaries. The session summaries are completed by the therapist assigned to the case after each session with the clients. They are a description of what occurred in the session that include statements that clients or the therapist(s) made during the session. The session summaries are reviewed and signed by the faculty supervisor. These summaries were used to identify patterns and themes of pursuing and distancing in the marriage as well as indications of what role conflict may have played in how couples manage closeness and distance in their relationships in order to answer the questions developed from the review of literature on research and theory. The session summaries provided the information from the case examples to further describe how conflict serves as a function in relationships as couples so that therapists and human service providers have a better understanding of how to help couples who are “stuck” in their process of managing conflicts.

Chapter 4

Results

Quantitative Research

The primary means of analysis used to evaluate the hypotheses in the quantitative component of the study to describe the relationship between conflict and the negotiation of emotional closeness in marriage were Correlation and One-way ANOVA statistics conducted by SPSSPC. The exception to this is analysis of hypothesis 2.1 and 3.1 where crosstabulation was conducted in order to determine the significance in the differences between wives and husbands calling for therapy and differences between husbands' and wives' satisfaction with low levels of closeness. In addition, hypothesis 3.2 that concerns husbands' likelihood of coming to therapy at the request of their wives was examined with qualitative analysis as the existing data lacked the information needed to test the hypothesis with quantitative methods.

Hypothesis 1.0

Hypothesis 1.0 states that married individuals who are more satisfied with the level of closeness in their relationship will perceive the problem (marital conflict) in their relationship as less serious than couples who are less satisfied with their closeness. A correlation statistic was used to test this hypothesis. Results show that there is a negative association between satisfaction with closeness and seriousness of the problem ($r = -.259, p < .01$). Thus, when individuals report a higher level of satisfaction with closeness, there are more likely to report that the problem in their relationship as less serious than couples

who are less satisfied with the closeness in their relationship (see Table 1).

When looking at the relationship between seriousness of the problem and satisfaction with closeness in the relationship along gender lines, findings were significant for men ($r = -.183$, $p < .01$) and for women ($r = -.315$, $p < .01$) revealing a strong negative association regardless of gender (see Table 1).

Table 1

Relationship Between Satisfaction with Closeness and Client's Perception of Seriousness of the Problem

	Perceived Seriousness of the Problem
	<u>Pearson Correlation Sig. (1-tailed)</u>
Satisfaction with Closeness	Men Only $r = -.183^{**}$ Women Only $r = -.315^{**}$ Men and Women $r = -.259^{**}$

^{**}Indicates the score is significant, $p < .01$

Hypothesis 2.0

Hypothesis 2.0 states that wives are more likely to be identified as pursuers than husbands. Support for this hypothesis was mixed in that wives were more likely to call requesting therapy ($n = 343$, Wives = 68.5%, Husbands = 31.5%). Findings related to the fact that wives were more likely to report greater dissatisfaction with closeness, more likely to see the problem as more serious, and more likely to see the presenting problem as less likely to be resolved than husbands were not significant. However, analysis reveals that there is a moderate trend in the data for these three areas as wives consistently scored higher than husbands indicating that within this sample, wives were more often found to be pursuers (see Tables 2 through 4).

Hypothesis 2.1. The analysis of hypothesis 2.1 stating that wives are more likely to call requesting therapy than husbands indicated that the differences were

significant ($p < .001$). Frequencies revealed that wives called requesting therapy in 68.5% of the cases and husbands called requesting therapy 31.5% of the cases ($n = 162$) (see Table 2). Findings from this hypothesis supports the overall notion that women are more often found to be pursuers in relationships at the point that the couple requests therapy as pursuers are described to demonstrate more interest in accessing therapy as a resource for making improvements or changes in the relationship and are less satisfied with the status quo (Fogarty, 1978).

Table 2

Four Quadrant Comparison of Gender Differences in Calling to Request Therapy

	Called for Therapy	Did not call for Therapy
Husbands	51	111
Wives	111	51

$\chi^2 = 44.444$, $p < .001$, $N = 162$

Hypothesis 2.2. Hypothesis 2.2 states that wives are more likely to report greater dissatisfaction with closeness than husbands. A One-way ANOVA revealed that results from analysis that wives were more likely to report greater dissatisfaction than husbands approached significance ($F(1,2) = 3.554$, $p > .060$) (see Table 3). Information from this analysis followed the predicted trend for wives reporting greater dissatisfaction with the amount of closeness in the marital relationship as indicated by the questions from the satisfaction inventory that was completed at session one of therapy.

Table 3

Relationship between Satisfaction with Closeness in Marriage and Gender of Client

		DESCRIPTIVES				
		Husbands		Wives		
Means		4.3576		4.0000		
<hr/>						
		ONE-WAY ANOVA				
Source of Problem		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	(Combined)	10.580	1	10.580	3.554	.060
Within Groups		979.403	330	2.977		

For descriptive purposes, the analysis of this hypothesis indicates that wives were more likely to report greater dissatisfaction with closeness than husbands indicating that within the sample, wives, based on this characteristic, were more likely to be identified as pursuers than husbands as literature describes pursuers to be less satisfied with distance in the relationship with clinical samples tending to score in the more disengaged range for cohesion on the Circumplex Model of Cohesion and Adaptability (Fogarty, 1978; Olson, Sprenkle, & Russell, 1979).

Hypothesis 2.3. Hypothesis 2.3 states Wives are more likely to see the presenting problem as more serious than husbands. A One-way Analysis of Variance was used to test the hypothesis as "perceived seriousness of the problem" is a continuous variable scored on a Likert-type scale. Results from analysis of the data approached significance following the predicted trend that wives see the presenting problem as more serious ($F(1,2) = 3.482, p > .063$) (see Table 4). This identified trend is consistent with the overall theme that women can be described as pursuers in marriages where couples seek therapy

than men as literature describes pursuers as less satisfied with the status quo in their relationships (Fogarty, 1978).

Table 4

Relationship between Perceived Seriousness of the Problem and Gender of Client

		DESCRIPTIVES				
		Husbands				Wives
Means		2.20				2.37
		ONE-WAY ANOVA				
Source of Problem		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	(Combined)	2.262	1	2.262	3.482	.063
Within Groups		212.449	327	.650		

Hypothesis 2.4. Wives are more likely to see the presenting problem as less likely to be resolved than husbands. Consistent with other sub-hypotheses, findings for sub-hypothesis 2.4 followed the predicted trend describing wives assuming the pursuer role in their marriages at the point that the couple entered therapy. As individual perceptions of the "likelihood that the problem will be resolved" was scored on a Likert-type scale from 0=not likely at all to 3=highly likely, a One-way analysis was used. Analysis revealed findings that were moderately significant ($F(1,2) = 3.606, p > .058$) in comparing differences between husbands' and wives' perceptions of likelihood for improvement of the problem in their marital relationships (see Table 5).

Table 5

Relationship between Likelihood of Problem to be Resolved and Gender of Client

		DESCRIPTIVES				
		Husbands		Wives		
Means		1.97		1.78		
		ONE-WAY ANOVA				
Source of Problem		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	(Combined)	3.110	1	3.110	3.606	.058
Within Groups		269.046	312	.862		

Hypothesis 3.0

Hypothesis 3.0 states that husbands are more likely to be identified as distancers than wives. Findings from analysis of the data for the sub-hypothesis 3.1 through 3.4 were mixed. That is, there appeared to be a moderate trend that described men as distancers in marriages at the point the couple entered therapy more often than women. However, results for each of the hypotheses were not significant.

Hypothesis 3.1. Husbands are more likely to report more satisfaction with lower levels of emotional closeness than wives. In order to analyze this hypothesis, a median split was conducted grouping the sample into four quadrants: 1) low satisfaction with low cohesion, 2) low satisfaction with high cohesion, 3) high satisfaction with low cohesion, and 4) high satisfaction with high cohesion so that comparisons could be made between genders in relationship to the two variables. From this grouping, a crosstabulation analysis was used in order to look at differences along gender lines. Results from the analysis revealed interesting findings (see Table 6).

Table 6

Four Quadrant Comparison of Satisfaction with Cohesion Between Husbands and Wives

	Low Cohesion	High Cohesion
High Satisfaction	Husbands=11.9% Wives=9.2%	Husbands=49.1% Wives=39.9%
Low Satisfaction	Husbands=27% Wives=38.7%	Husbands=11.9% Wives=12.3%

$\chi^2 = 39.381, p < .001$

Table 6 shows that the greatest differences between husbands and wives tended to be in quadrants 1 and 4 with husbands most likely to fall in the high satisfaction and high cohesion quadrant (49.1%) and wives most likely to fall in the low satisfaction and low cohesion quadrant (38.7%). Husbands did score slightly higher in quadrant 3 that grouped individuals who indicated high satisfaction and low cohesion at 11.9% compared to wives' 9.2%. One interesting note in the results of the analysis was that men appeared to be more satisfied with the level of cohesion in their relationships regardless of whether cohesion was high or low.

Hypothesis 3.2. Husbands are more likely to report coming to therapy at partner's request than wives. After looking at information available within the existing database, information about who referred individuals to therapy was not present within the data. However, answers to the open-ended questions about who referred individuals for therapy and why they were attending therapy on the background forms completed at session one were obtained from the five cases used for the qualitative component of the study. Out of the five cases, 3 husbands reported on the background questionnaire they were coming to therapy at their wife's request and 2 husbands reported coming to therapy to "save the marriage." The two husbands who reported coming to therapy to "save their marriage" were identified as displaying more pursuing behaviors from content analysis of the case summaries. However, in looking at the information within the case summaries further, both of the husbands for the two couples were described by their wives and themselves as historically displaying more

distancing behaviors in their marriages until their wives chose to distance emotionally and even separate from their husband.

Hypothesis 3.3. Husbands are more likely to see the problem as less serious than wives. Results were obtained by employing a One-way ANOVA that tested the complementary hypothesis 2.3 (see Table 4). Again findings followed the predicted trend and approached significance ($F(1,2) = 3.482, p > .063$) in that husbands tended to score the seriousness of the problem as less serious than did wives. This descriptive trend indicates a pattern that is consistent with the overall theme of men more often assuming the role of distancer at the time a couple enters therapy than do women (Fogarty, 1978).

Hypothesis 3.4. Husbands are more likely to see the problem as more likely to be resolved than wives. This hypothesis parallels predictions made about wives' perceptions of the likelihood that the problem will be resolved. One-way ANOVA was used to analyze the data as was used for hypothesis 2.4 (see Table 5). Again, findings approached significance ($F(1,2) = 3.606, p > .058$) indicating that there is a moderate trend for husbands to score higher on perceiving likelihood that improvements in the problems in their marriages can be made than wives scored on the background form at the time the couples entered marital therapy.

Qualitative Research

For the qualitative part of the research, behaviors, feelings, statements, or descriptions of behaviors were identified within the case summaries of the five cases that were selected based on the criteria used to narrow the sample size. Observations from the five cases that were selected were read and tallied by the

researcher broken down by who did the pursuing or distancing behaviors. In addition, when conflicts noted in the summaries as having been brought up in session, these were also noted and tallied for each case. The following tables are the lists of behaviors coded by person for each of the five cases (See Tables 7-11).

Table 7

Results of Qualitative Analysis of Case Summaries for Case #1

Pursuer	Distancer	Conflicts
H: Want relationship to work	W: Spend time away from home	W: graduate school
H: Wants to reconcile(3)	W: Time with others	W: moving
H: Feelings of depression	W: Nervous laughter to avoid answer (4)	W: different goals for marriage
W: Help H with depression	W: Drink alcohol (3)	W: W's alcohol use
H: "No control in relationship"	W: Late for appointment due to "forgetting"	H: feeling like W has had an affair (3)
H: Too dependent on relationship (4)	W: Refuses to communicate verbally	W: resents giving in to H
H: Therapy to save relationship	H: (Past) withhold interest in W's activities	
W: Share feelings in session when there is "no risk"	T: W pulls away when identity is threatened (6)	
	W: Focus conversation on other goals/school	
	T: W withhold feelings until no risk/ nothing "at stake" (5)	

*H=Husband, W=Wife, T=Therapist

**Number in parentheses indicates number of times observation was noted in case summaries. No number indicates observation was made only one time.

Table 8

Results of Qualitative Analysis of Case Summaries for Case #2

Pursuer	Distancer	Conflicts
H: Threatens divorce for attention (2)	W: Postpones discussions (H's Perception)	Lack of closeness (3)
H: Therapy to save the marriage	T: W appears undecided about relationship	Lack of sex
H: "Very committed to marriage" (3)	W: Get emotional needs from workout partner (2)	"The past"
H: Willing to wait for W (2)	W: 50% committed to the relationship (2)	W's relationships with friends
H: Criticize W due to rejection engages an argument(4)	W: Reject H sexually	"Petty things"
H: Does favors/nice things	H: Shut off emotional closeness first then W shut off	
H: Offer of sex	W: Distances by agreeing in a discussion to end conversation (H's perception) (2)	
H: Asks W for a date	W: Separated from H	
H: Willing to accept rejection if can have a life with W	W: H cannot meet my needs	
	W: Need independence / control	
	W: Need time to build trust (4)	
	H: Losing motivation to work on relationship	
	H: Can't let go of resentment	
	W: Avoids bringing up conflicts	

*H=Husband, W=Wife, T=Therapist

**Number in parentheses indicates number of times observation was noted in case summaries. No number indicates observation was made only one time.

Table 9

Results of Qualitative Analysis of Case Summaries for Case #3

Pursuer	Distancer	Conflicts
H: Knew he wanted to marry right away	W: surprised H wanted to marry her	H out late with friends
W: Makes a request (5)	H: Ignores wife (2)	H Time with friends (3)
W: Speaks in high voice "with Urgency" (3)	H: Out with friends	H not going to school
W: Stands & stares at H	H: Stay out late	W suspects H of affair (2)
W: Gripes (going to school & Repair work) (2)	H: W thinks H replaced her with a female friend	H lost his job
W: engaging H when he is on the telephone	W: Use signal to cut H off	W's nagging (3)
W: "Nagging" (H's perception)	H: "Withdrawn posture"	Sex (2)
W: Use signal then cut H off	H: Tells W to stop "rambling"	Housework
W: Getting angry at "little things" (2)	H: Gets defensive (3)	"The past" (4)
W: Yell at H to stay home	H: Leaves (4)	Little things (4)
H: Desire for sex=9	H: Do what I want with friends	H's Party at the house
W: Picked a fight and felt better	W: Desire for sex=3	
T: Couple connects through arguing	W: Picked a fight to avoid sex	
W: Expresses wanting to grow together	H: Avoided Homework of having a "heart to heart discussion"	
H: Stated he appreciates his wife	H: Avoid discussing problems after time-out	
W: Hitting H to get his attention	H: Push W out of the way	

*H=Husband, W=Wife, T=Therapist

**Number in parentheses indicates number of times observation was noted in case summaries. No number indicates observation was made only one time.

Table 10

Results of Qualitative Analysis of Case Summaries for Case #4

Pursuer	Distancer	Conflicts
W: I feel less confident in relationship	H: Spent time in chat rooms on computer	H's relationship to ex-wife (3)
W: Crying and tearful	H: Communicate less about day (3)	H's computer time (5)
H: Describes self as a touchy person need for physical intimacy	H: Not come home at wife's request	W's son
W: Desire to connect through talking	H: Doesn't tell W things	New house (3)
W: Feeling depressed and ignored	H: Criticize W (7)	Chores (11)
W: Blows up which resulted in H talking to her	H: Use humor to lighten intensity	W's role as wife (9)
W: Minimize dishes chore to get more from H	H: Argue with W about son	Little things (5)
W: Had sex with H 3 times last week to connect with H	H: Fine with status quo except W's depression (3)	
H: Ask W to take care of him	H: Was sarcastic about homework (W's perception.)	
Went on vacation together	W: Does not want to be "touchy feely"	
W: Made H breakfast	H: Did dishes and got angry re: no thanks from W	
H: Acknowledged when W needed help (W's perception)	H/W: Distance after no response from partner	
W: Made request (5)	W: Focus on house instead of relationship/ needs met elsewhere	
	H: Minimizes what W does around house	
	H: Complains to escape helping W	

*H=Husband, W=Wife, T=Therapist

**Number in parentheses indicates number of times observation was noted in case summaries. No number indicates observation was made only one time.

Table 11

Results of Qualitative Analysis of Case Summaries for Case #5

Pursuer	Distancer	Conflicts
W: Complaints about H's commitment (9)	H: Busy with outside activities (2)	Communication
W: Wants to resolve problems right now (3)	H: "W doesn't understand"	Outside activities (2)
W: Want to argue 1-2 times a week	H: "Drift off" when W is speaking	Husband's work (4)
W: Use of nagging tone	H: "Fights are my fault"	Husband's school
W: Do things to keep husband from getting mad and ignoring her	H: Avoids problems (3)	New baby (3)
W: "Everything is miserable"	H: Doesn't want to bother W with discussion about his day	H's experience in war
W: "Silence is torture"	H: Brings up baby when talking about relationship (4)	"Little things" (5)
W: "I have tried everything" (2)	H: Want to argue 1-2 times a year	Amount of time talking (5)
W: Wants someone to depend on	H: Ignore (3)	Money (2)
W: Wants someone to talk to (6)	H: Thinks W blows up too fast	Affair
T: Homework for W to use energy arguing to do couple things	H: Needs more time to think (2)	
W: Feels like H is a roommate	H: No eye contact	
W: H's fault for their problems	H: Wife thinks H won't have a conversation	
T: Pointed out W's complaining	H: Too tired to talk	
W: Answered question for H	H: Only enjoys work	
W: Feels the need to babble	T: Homework for H to use energy arguing to do alone things	
H: Hold W's hand	H: Not appreciated	
W: Cries/becomes tearful (8)	T: H withdraws	
W: Fear of "fading out"	H: Fear of being smothered	
H: Reports attempting to spend quality time with W	W: We are fixed	
H: Still have issues to work on	W: No demand for response or explanation from H	
W: Talk about feelings that H was having an affair		

*H=Husband, W=Wife, T=Therapist

**Number in parentheses indicates number of times observation was noted in case summaries. No number indicates observation was made only one time.

couple reports only small amounts of conflict when they comply with the homework for W give H space and for H give W connection**Couple reports less conflict as moved toward attainment of goals related to closeness in therapy*

Observations for pursuing and distancing were then combined from each case in the sample to compile a total number of observations for each theme across cases. Observations that were identified as specifically related to a homework that the therapist assigned as well as observations made after the couple identified that they had completed their goals were omitted, as these observations were not indicative of the couples' processes without intervention by therapy. The limitation of the data collected prevented observation of a connection of the two themes through time that would establish a causal relationship. However, information was gathered in order to describe the pattern of pursuing and distancing and related conflicts for each couple such that future research may be conducted in order to observe and code the interactional link through time that occurs in stable patterns in relationships.

From the pool of observations made about pursuing and distancing patterns, themes were identified that developed out of organizing the data that provide insight into understanding these stabilized patterns at multiple levels. That is, behaviors were organized into groups based on the interactional level, or the ground on which couples experience attempts to get their needs met. The next level involves each partner's needs related to the level of closeness that each desires in their relationship. Couples who were seen in therapy who described a "stuck" pattern of interaction that was identified by the therapist indicated a different preference for the level of closeness and distance from their partners, thus producing a complementary pattern of pursuing and distancing at a process level. Lastly, a metalevel need was identified that was symmetrical in

nature for each couple in the sample such that each person, pursuer and distancer, appeared to be seeking acceptance and validation from his or her partner. That is, each person seemed to be wanting his or her partner meet their needs for closeness and thus accept him or her as the desire for closeness is part of who each partner is. This metalevel need may encompass a variety of needs that have been identified as key components of a relationship including the desire (or lack of desire) for closeness (see Table 12). Conflict essentially becomes the way that partners attempt to get their needs met and an opportunity for their partners to validate and accept who they are.

Table 12

Identified Themes From Analysis of Pursuing and Distancing Patterns Across Cases

Themes	Pursuing	Distancing
Preference for Closeness	<p>T observed couple connects through arguing Picked a fight and felt better as spouse engaged with her Wife does things to keep husband from getting mad and ignoring her Feels like spouse is a "roommate" Express a high level of commitment to marriage Wanted to marry spouse "right away" Wants to argue more than spouse (1-2 times a week) Held spouse's hand (physical closeness) Describes self as a touchy person with a high need for physical intimacy Offer of sex to spouse Desire for sex higher than spouse Request for spouse to take care of him Desire to connect through talking Wants someone to talk to Wants someone to depend on T suggest use energy spent arguing to do couple things Expresses wanting to "grow together" with spouse Desire for relationship to work Desire to continue working in therapy although spouse states satisfied</p>	<p>Pulls away when identity is threatened T suggest use energy spent arguing doing alone activities Picked a fight to avoid sex Pushed spouse out of the way Demonstrated withdrawn posture T observed physical movement away from spouse Thinks partner blows up too fast Wants to argue less than partner (1-2 times a year) Use of humor to lighten intensity Request for more time to think and to respond Nervous laughter/avoided answering questions Spouse does not want to be "touchy feely" Wants activities outside of marriage more than spouse Lower desire for sex than spouse Need independence</p>
Process By Which Partners Attempt to get Needs Met	<p>Too dependent on the relationship Threaten divorce Hitting to get attention Yell at spouse to stay home Get angry at little things Use time out signal then cut spouse off Nagging Engages spouse when spouse is on the telephone Crying Stand and stare at spouse Speak in a high voice "with urgency" Minimize chores to get more from spouse "blows up" so spouse will talk Cries to get attention from spouse when spouse ignores Answers question for spouse Blaming "I have tried everything" "Everything is miserable" Nagging tone Request to resolve problems "right now" when spouse puts them off No control in relationship Feelings of depression that engage spouse Feel less confident in relationship Make a request Express a high level of commitment to marriage Willingness to accept rejection if one can have a relationship with spouse Willing to wait for spouse In therapy to save the marriage after spouse threatens separation Desire to reconcile Desire to continue working in therapy though spouse states satisfied</p>	<p>"Shut off" emotional closeness after disappointment Withhold interest in spouse's activities Avoid discussion of problems after time out Avoided having a "heart to heart" discussion with spouse Leaves Gets defensive Tells spouse to "stop rambling" Thinks spouse replaced her with a friend Stay out late Go out with friends Ignores spouse Minimizes what spouse does to help Sarcasm Argue with spouse about children (when avoiding relationship discussions) Criticism /ends discussion Keeps things from spouse Refuse to talk about events of the day Spend time on the computer Tells spouse only enjoys work Complains of being too tired to talk Refuses Eye contact Avoids problems "Drift off" when spouse is talking Busy with outside activities Refuses to talk to spouse Focus conversation on goals outside relationship Late for appointment for therapy Drink alcohol Lower desire for sex than spouse Use of signal to cut partner off then leave Get needs met elsewhere through other relationships Separation Agrees in a discussion to end conversation Reject spouse sexually States "we are fixed" and no need for therapy when spouse still has issues to discuss Less committed to the relationship than partner T observes spouse undecided about relationship Cannot let go of resentment toward spouse Losing motivation to work on relationship Take blame/shut down Complains to escape helping with household tasks Need independence/control Refuse to come home at spouse's request State "fine with the Status Quo" Tells spouse "I will do what I want with friends"</p>
Need for Validation/ Acceptance	<p>"Silence is torture" Criticize wife after she rejects husband/engages in an argument Wife's request to talk about feelings related to her suspicion of husband having an affair Complaints about partner's lack of commitment Feeling depressed Feeling ignored Fear of "fading out" Feels the need to babble to feel noticed Thinks spouse replaced her with a friend</p>	<p>Believe spouse will not meet needs Surprised spouse wanted to marry Distance after no response from partner Will only share feelings in session when there is "no risk" of not being accepted Avoids bringing up conflicts for fear of rejection Fear of being smothered Feels that spouse does not understand Requests more time to build trust Withdrawal from spouse after receiving no "thanks" for helping with chores Feels like spouse does not appreciate him</p>

Observations from the five cases indicate that women demonstrated pursuing behaviors ($n = 75$) more often than did men ($n = 34$), and men demonstrated withdrawing behaviors ($n = 72$) more often than women ($n = 47$). An interesting note about the two cases where wives were identified more often as distancers is that, wives indicated a "turning point" in the relationship. Each of the wives described feeling like they tried "everything" to get their husband's attention and were at the point of giving up on the relationship when the couples entered therapy. The husbands were the ones to contact the clinic for services initially, and reported being in therapy to "save the marriage." Additionally, observations that were made after a "turning point" in therapy based on an intervention by the therapist were omitted as observations indicate movement toward the couple's goals rather than the patterns that were present at the onset of therapy.

Question 1

Do couples who are more extreme at pursuing and distancing use conflict to maintain stability or morphostasis? The five cases that were identified to be reviewed indicated that each couple in the sample experienced a sense of "stuckness" from a pattern of interaction that seemed to stabilize over time. In each of the cases, couples identified key areas of conflict for the marriage were "little" or "petty" things that were arguments they experienced frequently in their marriage. One couple could even agree with each other that these things should not be important to them, but they kept resurfacing in their relationship. Thus the patterns of how the couples interacted became stable over time and couples

could predict their arguments. The partners maintained a level of connection to each other using "little things" to work out the bigger relationship issue either to draw a partner into an argument or pushing a partner away by bringing up an issue as an "out."

In addition to "little things" that couples identified as areas of conflict, there were many areas of conflict related to the amount of time spent together or separate from each other. For example, time spent with friends seemed to be an area of conflict common to the cases. In addition, "lack of closeness", "amount of time talking", "amount of time spent on activities outside the marriage", "work", and "school" were all identified as conflicts in therapy sessions. While gender does not appear to be a significant factor in determining areas of conflict for this sample, data does indicate that the partner who has demonstrated more of the pursuing behaviors in each case seemed to be bringing up the conflicts in therapy, and the complaints that are the subject of the conflict are most often about the distancer's behavior.

The conflicts identified in each of the cases mirror the behaviors that have been identified as pursuing and distancing behaviors. That is, most of the behaviors described in the session summaries surround the content of the argument that the couple was having or describing. Function of conflict then becomes the way in which husbands and wives attempt to meet their individual needs for closeness. Issues, even those defined as "little things" by the couples, become the testing ground for the metalevel issue of closeness. As long as couples keep things related to the issues or conflicts about things, the arguments

rarely become personal attacks. Rather, they remain about disagreements on money, children, sex, time together or apart. When arguments move to a higher level where they become about each partner rather than about an issue, great risk is taken by each partner. That is, each person risks not getting one's needs met related to closeness in the relationship and rejection ultimately of self. In one case, the couple reported that after an intervention in therapy where the therapists assigned homework for wife to give husband space and husband to give wife connection, they experienced only small amounts of conflict and arguments were less severe.

Question 2

Are distancing behaviors from one's partner related to attempts to connect through conflict with one's partner? In looking at the information collected from the five cases in the sample, behaviors were identified where the distancing spouse indicated an intention of distancing to move away or avoiding arguments after the pursuing spouse attempted to engage. For, example, the pursuing partner in one couple stated that she picked a fight with her partner and felt better. The spouse responded by attempting to withdraw through ignoring, leaving the room, and finally engaging in the argument in a way that the pursuing spouse was rejected verbally and pushing his partner out of the way. In addition, a common response to "nagging" as interpreted by the withdrawing spouse, was to ignore spouse or to criticize them with personal attack. Another way spouses withdrew from conflict was to have a physical complaint such as "too tired to talk" or to express agreement in the argument to end the conversation.

While there is no evidence in the data that can determine a causal relationship, there are several examples of instances where one partner brought up a topic that appeared to be associated with distancing between the spouses. The use of arguments such as "little things", money, and children were identified as topics that deflected discussion away from the couple or ended an interaction altogether. The use of humor or sarcasm was also identified in the case summaries as an effective tool to distance from the pursuing partner.

The notion of control seems to be apparent in each of these cases as the more the pursuing partner attempts to change the distancer's behavior and move closer to them, the more the distancing partner moves away. For example, one case identified a distancer who responded to his pursuing partner by telling her that he could "do what he wants with his friends." The pursuer, asking for time and attention from her partner, received this attention in the form of an argument, but ultimately the distancing spouse followed through with his statement and went out with his friends fulfilling his preference for closeness/distance with his spouse.

Question 3

Are pursuing behaviors of one's partner are positively related to attempts to distance through conflict from one's partner? There are apparent relationships that can be noted from the qualitative data that can be used to describe what may occur in these stable patterns. The first observation that was noted is in the content of the disagreements between husbands and wives in the sample. That is, many of the argument topics surround the theme of spending time and getting

attention from one's partner. Often, the pursuer seemed to be the one who was bringing up areas of dissatisfaction around the distancer's withdrawing behavior. For example, time with friends was a common item of disagreement between spouses where the pursuer was complaining about the amount of time that friends were taking away from their marital relationship. A response by the distancer appeared to be to label the pursuer's complaint as a "nag", another topic of conflict, and disengage from the conversation.

In the "Preference for Closeness" theme in Table 15, feeling statements and behaviors were identified that describe a pursuer engaging in behaviors to prevent spouse from ignoring her including moving physically closer to spouse during an argument. In one case, the pursuer physically stood in front of the distancing spouse as he was trying to leave the room, which resulted in physical violence as the pursuing partner was pushed out of the way. In addition, pursuing spouses were also observed to take a "one down" position in an argument in an attempt to prevent the distancing spouse from moving further away. In one case, the pursuing spouse frequently cried, counted 8 times in one case, during an argument, which the distancing spouse responded to her by moving closer physically to comfort her.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This study is an attempt to describe and to begin to operationalize the patterns of pursuing and distancing in marital relationships. Given what previous literature states about pursuing and distancing behaviors and theory that describes how factors such as conflict can be triangulated into relationships in order to stabilize patterns of interaction, this study appears to have accomplished its purpose in providing a foundation on which to build in future research. beyond this purpose, content analysis revealed themes that describe what may occur between married partners at a greater level than pursuing and distancing in order to find a workable solution for a couple's differences in desire for closeness. The metalevel theme identified describes a symmetrical need for acceptance and validation for both partners. Findings from the study show that using an integrative model of family therapy provides a more comprehensive view of relationship problems than just taking into consideration contextual, perspective, and process factors alone (Hendrix, et al., 1999). Research in this area can provide insight for both therapists and couples in helping to identify interventions and methods of treatment that can help couples to effectively set and accomplish the goals they have for their relationships.

Hypothesis 1.0

The first notable finding of this study within the quantitative portion of the research is that there is a significant negative relationship between an individual's satisfaction with closeness and the individual's perception of the

seriousness of the conflict, as indicated on the problem checklist, in his or her relationship. This finding is significant to the study in that the hypothesis provides the foundation that was described in theory that satisfaction with closeness, the contextual issue the pursuing and distancing pattern revolves around, is stabilized by the conflict in the marriage. The more dissatisfied an individual was with the closeness in their marriage, the more serious that individual described the conflict in their relationship to be for both men and women (see Table 1). Consistent with research by Christensen and Shenk (1991), couples who are more stable in their patterns of pursuing and distancing and who demonstrate a complementary need for closeness and distance may be less satisfied with getting their needs regarding closeness and distance met. Thus, interaction patterns may be described by married individuals as more negative (Christensen & Shenk, 1991).

The association was slightly stronger for women than for men (see Table 1), which may be explained by findings in later hypotheses that men tend to indicate greater satisfaction with closeness overall than women no matter if the level of closeness is high or low (see Table 6). In addition, as later hypotheses found a trend for women to more often assume a pursuing role in relationships at the start of therapy, women may see the conflict in their relationship as more serious as pursuers are described to be less satisfied with the status quo than are distancers (Fogarty, 1978) thus seeing a greater need for change.

Hypothesis 2.0

Within this section of the study, the purpose was twofold. That is, the first goal of this hypothesis was to begin to operationalize some of the pursuing behaviors that have been described in both theory and in practice. The second purpose is to look at differences in gender based upon these operationalized behaviors. From previous research and theory about pursuing, sub-hypotheses were developed that included pursuers being more likely to call requesting therapy, more likely to report greater dissatisfaction with closeness, more likely to see the presenting problem (conflict) as more serious, and less likely to see the problem to be resolved than distancers. The author also made predictions regarding gender in that women were predicted to more often be identified as pursuers at the point of the couple entering therapy.

Results for this hypothesis were mixed. Findings for hypothesis 2.1 were highly significant ($p < .01$) (see Table 2) in that wives were more likely to call requesting therapy than husbands. This hypothesis was based on the notion that pursuers would demonstrate more interest in accessing therapy as a resource in order to make changes to get their needs met related to closeness (Fogarty, 1978).

The second descriptive sub-hypothesis, hypothesis 2.2, which predicted that wives are more likely to report greater dissatisfaction with closeness than husbands, revealed findings consistent with the predicted trend (see Table 3). This finding for pursuers fits with ideas presented in theory and in previous research that pursuers are less satisfied with distance in their relationships, thus

triggering the pursuing behaviors that are often observed and described in therapy (Fogarty, 1978; James, 1989; Guerin, 1996). In addition, findings revealed that women were more often found to be in the role of the partner who called requesting therapy. Given the results from the qualitative portion of the study which indicated that the partner who demonstrated more pursuing behaviors also called for therapy, this may indicate that wives may assume the role of pursuer more often than men at the point the couple enters therapy. A further step in this hypothesis would be to identify for cases to be analyzed qualitatively to see which partner demonstrated more pursuing behaviors and to compare that information to who called requesting therapy to see if, indeed, the pursuer does tend to be the partner who most often calls for therapy. Results from the five cases selected for the qualitative component does seem to be consistent with this premise that in each of the cases, whether it was husband or wife who called requesting therapy, it was the partner who demonstrated more pursuing behaviors identified in the case summaries.

The third and fourth sub-hypothesis, hypothesis 2.3 and hypothesis 2.4 that were developed based upon information gathered in previous research and theory predicted that wives would be more likely to see the presenting problem (conflict) as more serious than husbands and that wives were more likely to see the presenting problem as less likely to be resolved indicate further that wives would be more likely to assume a pursuing role in their relationship. While findings were not significant (see Tables 3 and 4), results did follow the predicted trend providing some key descriptive information for therapists and researchers

alike. That is, importance may be placed on looking at differences in perception of the two partners in helping to establish workable goals in therapy. Results from this hypothesis may be indicative of the hopelessness that the pursuing partner feels through the rejection and abandonment the pursuing partner feels upon entering therapy (James, 1989). In addition, this may relate to the feelings of being in a "one-down" position and the pursuer's perception of the power that he or she holds in being able to effect change in the relationship if his or her partner does not see the problem as something serious and in need of work.

When there are differences in perception of seriousness of the problem as well as differences in seeing the problem as something that can be resolved, whether the perception stems from wives or husbands, therapists are presented a challenge in getting both partners invested in working on a goal or even finding a goal that fits with both partner's needs. Working on the problem that one partner sees as serious may create a problem for the other partner if change is implemented. This may be why clinicians revert to a goal of better conflict resolution skills as both partners may agree that they need to be able to resolve conflict more effectively (Markman, et al., 1993). However, given that conflict resolution skills may be what is at the surface, the underlying patterns of process indicate that if couples cannot agree on what they see as is needed (specifically related to closeness), then skills training may not bring about change and couples may continue to be frustrated with their relationship and with therapy as well.

Hypothesis 3.0

As with Hypothesis 2.0, this section of the research again serves two purposes. First, the attempt to operationalize descriptions of distancing that were consistent with what previous research and theory held about the distancing pattern. Second, predictions about patterns related to gender for distancing were made. Four sub-hypotheses were developed selecting behaviors that were coded in the database that followed results from previous studies that found husbands to more often display distancing patterns than did wives (Markman, et al., 1993). Findings for these hypotheses revealed mixed support for men assuming a distancing role in their relationships at the point the couple entered therapy. Findings may differ from previous studies in that the sample that was used for this study was strictly a clinical sample of couples in therapy with data collected at session one.

Sub-hypothesis 3.1, which proposed that husbands were more likely to report more satisfaction with lower levels of emotional closeness than wives, revealed some interesting findings. The crosstabulation analysis of the four quadrants developed regarding level of satisfaction with level of cohesion in table 6, found little difference between husbands and wives in the quadrant "high satisfaction with low cohesion", though husbands had a slightly greater percentage than wives. In further analysis of these results, husbands displayed a greater percentage of satisfaction with cohesion as a group no matter what the level of cohesion was. This may indicate that husbands are more satisfied with cohesion, thus expressing less desire for change in cohesion in the relationship.

The level of satisfaction that the husbands expressed in comparison to the wives may lend support to the notion that husbands are more satisfied with the "status quo", which is consistent with previous findings in this study related to wives' investment in seeking out therapy and pursuing changes related to cohesion.

Sub-hypothesis 3.2 stating that husbands were more likely to come to therapy at the request of their partner was analyzed using information from the cases selected from the qualitative component of the research, and seemed to support the notion that husbands are more likely to display patterns of distancing than wives. An interesting note about the information revealed related to this hypothesis is that there was a glimpse of patterns displayed by the couple over time. That is, while only in three of the five cases husbands reported coming to therapy at the request of their spouse, the two husbands who did not report this were found to display more pursuing behaviors than their partner at entrance of therapy. However, in these two cases, both husband and wife describe a long pattern of the wife pursuing and the husband distancing until the wife chose to distance from the relationship through separation or threat of separation. Both husband and wife described a "turning point" in their relationship where husband saw a need to come to therapy in order to "save the relationship." This may be indicative of the process described by researchers and theorists where partners "flip" roles after the distancer's threshold or comfort level for amount of distance has been triggered by the pursuing spouse moving too far away (Fogarty, 1978; Israelstam, 1989; Guerin, et al., 1996). This may provide support that even

across time, husbands assume a distancing role in their relationships counter to their wives' pursuing role.

Sub-hypotheses 3.3 and 3.4, which are the complementary piece to sub-hypotheses 2.3 and 2.4 also displayed findings along the predicted trends that husbands would be more likely to see the problem as less serious and more likely to be resolved than wives (see tables 4 and 5). While findings were not significant, there appears to be enough evidence that further research should be done related to these hypotheses to better identify and operationalize patterns of pursuing and distancing. As with sub-hypotheses 2.3 and 2.4, sub-hypotheses 3.3 and 3.4 reveal information that descriptively coincides with previous research and theory about pursuing and distancing. What may be key to getting a better understanding of what is indicative of patterns of pursuing and distancing is to eliminate the factor of gender and identify through qualitative methods which partner is most likely to display a stronger pattern of pursuing and which partner displays the stronger pattern of distancing and then determine whether or not the sub-hypotheses remain true for pursuers and distancers in general.

Question 1

Question 1 asks "Do couples who are more extreme at pursuing and distancing use conflict to maintain stability or morphostasis?" In exploring the observations gathered from content analysis of the five selected cases, conflict did appear to be a stabilizing factor for the couples' processes of pursuing and distancing. However, a measure of extremeness of pursuing and distancing was not obtained from the case summaries. More information about the length of

time that the couple has seen themselves as “stuck” in their pattern as well as the extent to which the couple sees the problem as affecting their relationship is needed. Two of the five couples did mention separation or past separation, which may indicate the extent of the severity of the “stuckness” that they were feeling. These two couples also describe a “flip” in the roles of pursuer and distancer in that husbands were historically the distancer in the relationship until the wives described reaching a “breaking point” where they had given up and distanced from their partner.

Conflicts that were identified by the couple in therapy appeared to be directly related to movements toward and away from his or her partner. Conflicts often assumed a theme of “time together or apart”, “suspicion of affairs”, and “time spent on other activities” that took the partner away from spouse. In addition, other conflicts such as household chores and children were also identified. Interestingly, in the case summary notes these conflicts could be seen at least times to be used during efforts to distance or detract conversation away from issues related to needs for closeness or distance in the marriage.

Lastly, each of the five cases mentioned frequent arguments over “little things” that the couples did not understand why they were fighting over them. The content of “little things” was often not recalled by the couple, however they remembered the feelings and the significance of the argument itself. One interpretation that could be made about arguments about “little things” is that there was a greater underlying issue related the themes of preference for closeness and distance in the relationship, and to the even greater theme of

acceptance and validation needed from partner. The function of conflict then becomes the way in which husbands and wives attempt to meet their individual needs for closeness. Issues such as little things become the battleground for the metalevel issue of closeness. As long as couples keep things related to the issues or conflicts about little things, the arguments never become personal attacks. Rather, they remain about disagreements on money, children, sex, time together or apart. When arguments move to a higher level where they become more about each partner rather than about an issue, great risk is taken by each partner. That is, each person risks not getting one's needs met related to closeness in the relationship as well as rejection by partner ultimately of oneself.

This generates some interesting questions for both researchers and clinicians. The first of these questions is related to setting workable goals for therapy that each person can agree upon when partners express different needs for closeness and distance. Can goals be established in therapy when there is a difference in the level of need for closeness and distance? Given this question, what clinicians often find is that when this is explored, are their clients willing to risk acknowledging this difference that may mean to them that their needs will be rejected in favor of their partner's? The metalevel need that was identified which was symmetrical in nature for each couple in the sample such that each person pursuer and distancer, appeared to be seeking acceptance and validation from his or her partner. That is, each person seemed to be wanting his or her partner meet their needs for closeness and thus accept him or her as the desire for closeness is part of who each partner is key to answering this question for the

couple and clinician alike. Exploration of the similarities that husbands and wives have regarding this issue can be the foundation in helping couples to change as they see that they are alike in needing validation and acceptance. As each sees that they must at least acknowledge his or her partner's needs, a level of understanding is developed that may provide the ground on which couples can work to make changes. To accomplish this, the first step may be to help each partner to take the risk to move to a personal level rather than stay at the issues by addressing the closeness/distance issue. The next step may be to address the validation/acceptance metalevel theme that can only be accomplished by moving couples out of the safer mode of working on conflict resolution skills or resolving (if possible) issues of difference one at a time.

Conflict essentially becomes the way that partners attempt to get their needs met and an opportunity for their partners to validate and accept who they are. It is part of the therapist's job to help couples to move beyond the content of the arguments, help couples to gain a different perspective of their relationship, and make changes in the patterns or processes so that they can have a more satisfying relationship with their spouse.

Question 2

Question 2 asks "Are distancing behaviors from one's partner related to attempts to connect through conflict with one's partner?" In attempt to answer this question, the lists of observations for distancing were compared to the lists of observations for pursuing for each couple. In addition, comparisons were made to the content identified for the conflicts for each couple. Overall, little

information existed to describe a causal link between the observations of pursuing and distancing. However, at times in the session summaries descriptions of connections of pursuing and distancing behaviors in arguments were made either through the depiction of a fight cycle or descriptively within the content of the notes.

The first observation that was made is that there appears to be several behaviors of both pursuing and distancing that surround a specific conflict, and given the way that the session summary was written, the author could obtain a sense of flow of interaction between the husband and wife. For example, one case described an instance where the pursuer was engaging in conflict with her partner and the distancing partner pushed his wife out of the way. The distancing partner further identified his intent being that he "needed to get out and get away" from his wife. Other intent of behaviors were described of distancers that included "using humor to lighten intensity and distract from issues", "shutting off emotional closeness after being disappointed", "bringing up children in order to detract conversation from relationship discussions", "expressing agreement with the purpose of ending the conversation", "taking blame in order to be able to shut down", "refusal to return home after spouse requests husband to come home", and "use of criticism to end discussion" (see Table 12). Although there were many other distancing behaviors identified (see Tables 7 through 11 and Table 12), a piece that was missing in data collection was the partner's intent while distancing. This may provide insight into the circular relationship between pursuing and distancing that maintains the cycle

and keeps the couple stuck. The use of a cycle that includes gathering information about observations, a person's intention, and the partner's interpretation that is used as a therapeutic tool may be an effective research tool in further understanding this connection.

Question 3

Are pursuing behaviors of one's partner are positively related to attempts to distance through conflict from one's partner? As with question 2, a limitation of the data obtained from the session summaries is an inability to discern for each observation noted the intent of the pursuing partner related to their partner's distancing behaviors. Comparisons of observations of spouses' pursuing behaviors with those of the partners' distancing behaviors as well as a comparison to the conflicts identified revealed many behaviors that were complementary to attempts to distance.

In addition, some observations included a description of intent (see Table 12). These observations included "crying to get partner's attention when ignored", "requesting to resolve problems 'right now' when partner wants to put them off", "expressing feelings of depression that engages partner", "engaging in therapy to save the marriage after partner threatens separation", "desire to continue working in therapy after spouse states she is satisfied", "hitting to get attention after being ignored", "picking a fight with spouse and feeling better", and "blowing up so that spouse will talk". Often, the pursuer seemed to be the one who was bringing up areas of dissatisfaction around the distancer's withdrawing behavior and conflicts often seemed to revolve around the partner's attempts to

move away from the pursuer. Again, future research may benefit from not only identifying what the pursuing behavior is, but also obtaining information about the partner's intent in the behavior and justification for the behavior to gain insight into the perception that the pursuing spouse has related to the distancing behaviors of his or her partner. Research that utilizes therapy tools such as cycles that display a time-oriented foundation upon which to understand the relationship that pursuing and distancing has as well as how conflicts come into play should be done that would benefit a conceptual understanding of couple processes. In addition, these practical tools may be improved upon such that they can be used to help couples effectively attain their goals in therapy by identifying points in which a therapist can intervene.

Implications

Implications that can be obtained from the research are many. As with a descriptive study, several opportunities for further research on the patterns of pursuing and distancing can be identified. In addition, a better foundation on which to explore the relationship that conflict has to this process identified and described in marital relationships has been established. From studies such as this, Human service providers and therapists can have a better conceptual understanding of "stuck" patterns couples experience in order to select appropriate goals and interventions in marital therapy. Understanding how a couple's context, individual perspectives and interpretations impact processes can improve efficacy of marital therapy and increase a therapist's ability to join with clients and intervene in effective ways.

First, using the methodology of content analysis can be used to better identify operationalized behaviors of pursuing and distancing regardless of the gender of the pursuer and distancer. That is, using the construct of the tables in making observations about pursuing and distancing, the hypotheses proposed in the quantitative portion of the study may be better tested by identifying which partner assumes the pursuing role and which partner assumes the distancing role and then using this information to analyze the data collected rather than making assumptions about husbands and wives. From a clinical perspective, gender of the pursuer and distancer may be less important than gaining insight into each individual's perspective and intrapersonal processes related to needs for emotional closeness.

Second, there is a need to use the qualitative component of observations of pursuing and distancing to further operationalize pursuing and distancing in order to understand the relationship between the two and then researchers may be able to further explore trends of pursuing and distancing along gender lines. In addition, therapists working with couples on marital issues can use this information obtained about each individual couple with whom they work in setting appropriate and realistic goals in order to effect change. Using the table format developed and the themes identified in the qualitative component of the research can provide further knowledge about the pattern of pursuing and distancing in marriage. In addition, this table can be used as a therapeutic tool presented to the couple in order to help them gain some insight into their own processes and problems such that they may be able to choose goals that better fit for them.

Third, a suggestion for future research includes using the table format developed in this research project to code observations either in a live observation format or from videotapes of therapy sessions. This may give insight into the temporal link between interactions of the couple's cycle and a better picture of how and when conflict is used to stabilize pursuing and distancing patterns as little empirical evidence exists about a pattern that is often identified in therapy and theorized about in therapy literature. Live observation or recorded observation of couples would also allow the expansion of research to include couples who are not seeking therapy as previous researchers have done in order to compare interactions of pursuing and distancing among non-clinical couples, couples who are not likely to seek therapy for their problems, and clinical couples.

A final suggestion for future research would be to revisit the hypotheses developed in the quantitative portion of the study eliminating the factor of gender, but using content analysis either through coding of case summaries or through live or video observation to identify both the pursuer and distancer in the relationships to see if predicted patterns about perception of the seriousness of the problem, perception of the likelihood that the problem can be resolved, and satisfaction with closeness hold true for pursuers and for distancers. Once this is accomplished and more is understood about specific observations of pursuing and distancing, trends according to gender may then be identified. In summary, much can be done to further explore the interrelated components of context, perspective, and process in the pursuing and distancing patterns in marriage.

The information from this study can provide the foundation upon which more can be learned in order to improve the quality and effectiveness of services for couples in therapy.

References

- Acitelli, L. K., Douvan, E., & Veroff, J. (1993). Perceptions of conflict in the first year of marriage: How important are similarity and understanding? Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 10, 5-19.
- Acitelli, L. K., Douvan, E., & Veroff, J. (1997). The changing influence of interpersonal perceptions on marital well-being among black and white couples. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 14, 291-304.
- American Psychiatric Association (1994). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (4th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.
- Bepko, C. & Krestan, J. A. (1985). The responsibility trap: A blueprint for treating the alcoholic family. New York: Collier Macmillan.
- Berns, S. B., Jacobson, N. S., & Gottman, J. M. (1999). Demand/withdraw interaction patterns between different types of batterers and their spouses. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 25, 337-348.
- Boss, P. G. (1983). The marital relationship: Boundaries and ambiguities. In H. I. McCubbin & C. R. Patterson (Eds.). Stress and the family, volume I: Coping with normative transitions. New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Burleson, B. R., & Denton, W. H. (1997). The relationship between communication skill and marital satisfaction: Some moderating effects. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 59, 884-902.

Cancian, F. (1986). Gender politics: Love and power in the private and public spheres. In A. Skolnick & J. Skolnick (Eds.), Family in transition. Boston: Little, Brown.

Christensen, A., & Shenk, J. L. (1991). Communication, conflict, and psychological distance in nondistressed, clinic, and divorcing couples. Journal of Counseling and Clinical Psychology, 59, 458-463.

Cook, D. R., & Cook, A. F. (1984). A systemic treatment approach to wife battering. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 10, 83-92.

Coontz, S. (1992). The way we never were: American families and the nostalgia trap. New York: Basic Books.

Cousins, P. C., & Vincent, J. P. (1983). Supportive and aversive behavior following spousal complaints. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 45, 679-681.

Crohan, S. E. (1992). Marital happiness and spousal consensus of beliefs about marital conflict: A longitudinal investigation. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 9, 89-102.

Dell, P. F. (1982). Beyond homeostasis: Toward a concept of coherence. Family Process, 21, 21-41.

Dell, P. F. (1985). Understanding Bateson and Maturana: Toward a biological foundation for the social sciences. Journal of Marriage and Family Therapy, 11, 1-20.

Doherty, W. J. (1981a). Cognitive process in intimate conflict: I Extending attribution theory. American Journal of Family Therapy, 9, 3-13.

Doherty, W. J. (1981b). Cognitive process in intimate conflict: II efficacy and learned helplessness. American Journal of Family Therapy, 9, 35-44.

Ferrington, K., & Chertok, E. (1993). Social conflict theories of the family. In P. G. Boss, W. J. Doherty, R. LaRossa, W. R. Schumm, & S. K. Steinmetz (Eds.), Sourcebook of family theories and methods: A contextual approach. New York: Plenum.

Fogarty, T. F. (1978). The distancer and the pursuer. In R. R. Sagar (Ed.), Georgetown family symposia: Volume III. A collection of selected papers. Washington D. C.: Georgetown University.

Gottman, J. M. (1979). Marital interaction: Empirical investigations. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

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

Gottman, J. M. (1994). Why marriages succeed or fail and how you can make yours last. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Gottman, J. M., & Krokoff, L. J. (1989). Marital interaction and satisfaction: A longitudinal view. Journal of Counseling and Clinical Psychology, 57, 47-52.

Guerin, P. J., Fogarty, T. F., Fay, L. F., & Kautto, J. G. (1996). Working with relationship triangles: The one-two-three of psychotherapy. New York: Guilford.

Heavey, C. L., Christensen, A., & Malamuth, N. M. (1995). The longitudinal impact of demand and withdraw during conflict. Journal of Counseling and Clinical Psychology, 63, 797-801.

Heller, P. E., & Wood, B. (1998). The process of intimacy: Similarity, understanding, and gender. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 24, 273-288.

Hendrix, C., Briggs, K. & Fournier, D. (1999, October). Integrative model of family therapy. National Conference on Family Relations, Sacramento, California.

Honeycut, J. M., Woods, B. L., & Fontenot, K. (1993). The endorsement of communication conflict rules as a function of engagement, marriage, and marital ideology. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 10, 285-304.

Isaac, S., & Michael, W. B. (1995). Handbook in research and evaluation: A collection of principles, methods, and strategies useful in the planning, design, and evaluation of studies in education and behavioral sciences. San Diego, CA: EdITS Publishers.

Israelstam, K. (1989). Intimacy and distance regulation: From homeostasis to structural coupling and coherence. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Marriage and Family Therapy, 10, 7-11.

James, K. (1989). When twos are really threes: The triangular dance of couple conflict. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Marriage and Family Therapy, 10, 179-186.

Kerr, M. E., & Bowen, M. (1988). Family evaluation: The role of the family as an emotional unit that governs individual behavior and development. New York: W. W. Norton and Company.

Kurdek, L. A. (1994). Conflict resolution styles in gay, lesbian, heterosexual nonparent, and heterosexual parent couples. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 56, 705-722.

Kurdek, L. A. (1995). Predicting change in marital satisfaction from husbands' and wives' conflict resolution styles. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 57, 153-164.

McCubbin, H. I., & Patterson, J. M. (1983). Family transitions: Adaptation to stress. In H. I. McCubbin & C. R. Patterson (Eds.). Stress and the family, volume I: Coping with normative transitions. New York: Brunner/Mazel.

Markman, H. J., Renick, M. J., Floyd, F. J., Stanley, S. M., & Clements, M. (1993). Preventing marital distress through communication and conflict management training: A 4- and 5-year follow-up. Journal of Counseling and Clinical Psychology, 61, 70-77.

Markman, H., Stanley, S., & Blumberg, S. L. (1994). Fighting for your marriage: Positive steps for preventing divorce and preserving a lasting love. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Margolin, G., & Wampold, B. (1981). Sequential analysis of conflict and accord in distressed and nondistressed marital patterns. Journal of Counseling and Clinical Psychology, 49, 554-567.

Montgomery, J., & Fewer, W. (1988). Family Systems and Beyond. New York: Human Sciences Press.

Olson, D. H. (1991). Three-dimensional (3D) Circumplex Model: Theoretical and methodological advances. Paper at the National Conference on Family Relations Theory Construction Workshop, Crystal City, Virginia.

Olson, D. H., Fournier, D., & Druckman, J. (1987). PREPARE ENRICH Counselor's Manual (Rev. ed.). Minneapolis, MN: PREPARE/ENRICH, Inc.

Olson, D. H., Sprenkle, D. H., & Russell, C. S. (1979). Circumplex model of marital and family systems: Cohesion, adaptability, dimensions, family types, and clinical applications. Family Process, 18, 2-28.

Piorkowski, G. K. (1994). Too close for comfort: Exploring the risks of intimacy. New York: Plenum.

Rands, M., Levinger, G., & Mellinger, G. D. (1981). Patterns of conflict resolution and marital satisfaction. Journal of Family Issues, 2, 297-321.

Ross, C. E. (1991). Marriage and the sense of control. Journal of Marriage and the family, 53, 831-838.

Rubin, L. B. (1983). Intimate strangers: Men and women together. New York: Harper & Row.

Schnarch, D. M. (1991). Constructing the sexual crucible: An integration of sexual and marital therapy. New York: W. W. Norton.

Schneider, S. W. (1989). Intermarriage: The challenge of living with differences between Christians and Jews. New York: Free Press.

Weitzman, J., & Dreen, K. (1982). Wife beating: A view of the marital dyad. Social Casework, 63, 259-265.

White, M. (1984). Marital therapy: Practical approaches to longstanding problems. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Marriage and Family Therapy, 5, 27-43.

Whitechurch, G. G., & Constantine, L. L. (1993). Systems theory. In P. G. Boss, W. J. Doherty, R. LaRossa, W. R. Schumm, & S. K. Steinmetz (Eds.), Sourcebook of family theories and methods: A contextual approach. New York: Plenum.

APPENDIX A

Intake Form

Intake Person: _____
Packet Sent on: _____

TELEPHONE INTAKE

Date: _____
Time: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone number: _____ Best Time to be contacted within 24 hours: _____

Who made the call? _____

Presenting Problem?

Who is in the family? (2-3 generation genogram)

Who else is involved in the problem?

How long has it been a problem? _____

Is there any alcohol or drug use? _____ If yes, who and how much?

Who will be able to attend sessions?

Times/days available for sessions?

Is anyone in the family on any kind of medication? If yes, who and what?

Is anyone in the family receiving mental health services anywhere else? If yes, who, where, and for what?

How did you hear about us? Who referred you?

- ☐ Telephone Book
☐ Referred by _____
☐ Received services before
☐ Other (Explain below)

Any financial considerations?

- ☐ No
☐ Yes. If yes, explain below

Yearly income before taxes _____

Fee _____

Therapist(s) assigned _____

Date _____

Case # _____

Center for Family Services, 103 Human Environmental Sciences West, Stillwater, OK 74078, (405) 744-5058

APPENDIX B
Background Form

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY
ID # _____
FAMILY MEMBER _____
DATE TAKEN _____

Center For Family Services
103 Human Environmental Sciences West
Stillwater, OK 74078

BACKGROUND FORM

(This information is part of your *confidential* file and will be available to CFS for research purposes)

NAME _____ BIRTHDATE _____

ADDRESS _____ ETHNICITY _____

HOME TELEPHONE _____ WORK TELEPHONE _____

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER _____ RELIGION _____

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION COMPLETED _____ PRIMARY OCCUPATION _____

NUMBER OF YEARS MARRIED _____ EVER MARRIED BEFORE? _____

ARE YOU A MILITARY VETERAN? YES NO YEARS OF SERVICE _____ TO _____

FOR IMMEDIATE FAMILY MEMBERS (SPOUSE, CHILDREN, AND STEP-CHILDREN)
PLEASE LIST NAME, GENDER, AGE, RELATIONSHIP, AND CURRENT RESIDENCE.

NAME GENDER AGE RELATIONSHIP RESIDENCE

SELF

FOR RELATIVES FROM THE FAMILY IN WHICH YOU GREW UP, PLEASE LIST NAME, GENDER, AGE, RELATIONSHIP, CURRENT RESIDENCE, AND MARITAL STATUS OF ALL WHO ARE STILL LIVING (PARENTS, BROTHERS, SISTERS, STEP-BROTHERS, AND STEP-SISTERS).

<u>NAME</u>	<u>GENDER</u>	<u>AGE</u>	<u>RELATIONSHIP</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>	<u>MARITAL STATUS</u>
-------------	---------------	------------	---------------------	------------------	-----------------------

IF ANY MEMBER(S) OF YOUR FAMILY (SPOUSE, CHILDREN, PARENTS, BROTHERS, SISTERS) IS/ARE DECEASED, PLEASE LIST BELOW:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RELATIONSHIP</u>	<u>AGE AT DEATH</u>	<u>DATE OF DEATH</u>	<u>CAUSE OF DEATH</u>
-------------	---------------------	---------------------	----------------------	-----------------------

FAMILY PHYSICIAN: NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CIRCLE YOUR PRESENT STATE OF HEALTH.

EXCELLENT GOOD FAIR POOR

PLEASE CHECK IF YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED THE FOLLOWING DURING THE PAST SIX MONTHS:

<input type="checkbox"/> SEVERE HEADACHES	<input type="checkbox"/> FREQUENT TIREDNESS
<input type="checkbox"/> SEVERE BACKACHES	<input type="checkbox"/> FREQUENT TROUBLE SLEEPING
<input type="checkbox"/> STOMACH PROBLEMS	<input type="checkbox"/> DIZZINESS OR FAINTING
<input type="checkbox"/> EATING PROBLEMS	<input type="checkbox"/> LARGE WEIGHT GAIN OR LOSS
<input type="checkbox"/> SEIZURES	<input type="checkbox"/> ASTHMA OR OTHER RESPIRATORY PROBLEM
<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPLAINED WORRY OR FEARFULNESS	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER PROBLEMS. (PLEASE SPECIFY) _____

HAS ANY MEMBER OF YOUR IMMEDIATE FAMILY EXPERIENCED ANY OF THE BEFORE MENTIONED SYMPTOMS IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS? ____ IF YES, PLEASE EXPLAIN.

HAVE YOU EVER HAD A SERIOUS MEDICAL ILLNESS? ____ IF YES, PLEASE EXPLAIN

HAVE ANY OF YOUR CHILDREN OR SPOUSE EVER HAD A SERIOUS MEDICAL ILLNESS? ____ IF YES, PLEASE EXPLAIN.

LIST ALL MEDICATIONS AND/OR DRUGS TAKEN WITHIN THE LAST 6 MONTHS, BOTH PRESCRIPTION AND NON PRESCRIPTION:

<u>NAME OF MEDICATION/DRUG</u>	<u>REASON TAKEN</u>	<u>CHECK IF TAKING NOW</u>
--------------------------------	---------------------	----------------------------

DO YOU SMOKE? ____ IF YES , HOW MUCH?

DO YOU THINK YOU SMOKE TOO MUCH?

DO YOU DRINK? ____ IF YES, HOW MUCH?

DO YOU THINK YOU DRINK TOO MUCH?

DO YOU THINK ANOTHER FAMILY MEMBER SMOKES OR DRINKS TOO MUCH? ____ IF YES, PLEASE EXPLAIN.

HAVE YOU EVER ATTEMPTED SUICIDE? ____ IF YES, GIVE DATE(S) AND DETAILS.

HAS ANYONE IN YOUR FAMILY EVER ATTEMPTED SUICIDE? ____ IF YES, GIVE NAME(S), RELATIONSHIP TO YOU, AND DETAILS.

ARE YOU CURRENTLY RECEIVING SERVICES FROM ANOTHER THERAPIST/COUNSELOR? ____ IF YES, WHO AND FOR WHAT?

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TREATED BY ANOTHER THERAPIST/COUNSELOR? _____ IF
YES, WHEN, WHERE, AND FOR WHAT?

FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST, PLEASE CHECK THE REASONS THAT YOU ARE
SEEKING SERVICE AT THIS TIME

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PERSONAL ENRICHMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> SINGLE PARENTING |
| <input type="checkbox"/> RELATIONSHIP ENRICHMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PARENTING-TWO PARENT FAMILY |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MARITAL ENRICHMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> STEP-PARENTING |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAMILY ENRICHMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> CHILD BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MARITAL CONFLICT | <input type="checkbox"/> ADOLESCENT BEHAVIOR PROBLEM |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAMILY CONFLICT | <input type="checkbox"/> ALCOHOL ABUSE-CHILD/ADOLESCENT |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SEXUAL PROBLEMS | <input type="checkbox"/> DRUG ABUSE-CHILD/ADOLESCENT |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PHYSICAL ABUSE | <input type="checkbox"/> ALCOHOL ABUSE-ADULT |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SEXUAL ABUSE | <input type="checkbox"/> DRUG ABUSE-ADULT |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DIVORCE ADJUSTMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> FAMILY STRESS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ADJUSTMENT TO LOSS | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (Specify) _____ |

PLEASE DESCRIBE IN YOUR OWN WORDS THE MAJOR REASON FOR SEEKING OUR
SERVICES AT THIS TIME.

HOW SERIOUS WOULD YOU SAY THIS PROBLEM IS RIGHT NOW? (CIRCLE ONE)

NOT AT ALL SERIOUS	SLIGHTLY SERIOUS	MODERATELY SERIOUS	VERY SERIOUS
-----------------------	---------------------	-----------------------	-----------------

HOW LIKELY DO YOU THINK THE PROBLEM IS TO CHANGE? (CIRCLE ONE)

NOT AT ALL LIKELY	SLIGHTLY LIKELY	MODERATELY LIKELY	VERY LIKELY
----------------------	--------------------	----------------------	----------------

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO GAIN FROM OUR SERVICES?

WHO REFERRED YOU TO OUR SERVICES? IF SELF-REFERRED, HOW DID YOU FIND
OUT ABOUT OUR SERVICES?

APPENDIX C

Couples Communication, Satisfaction, Adaptability and Cohesion Form

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

ID # _____

FAMILY MEMBER _____

DATE TAKEN _____

Center for Family Services
103 Human Environmental Sciences West
Stillwater, OK 74078
(405)744-5058

Using the following scale please answer the questions below.

Almost Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1	2	3	4	5

COUPLE COMMUNICATION

How well do you communicate as a couple?

- ___ 1. It is very easy for me to express all my true feelings to my partner.
- ___ 2. When we are having a problem, my partner often gives me the silent treatment.
- ___ 3. My partner sometimes makes comments which put me down.
- ___ 4. I am sometimes afraid to ask my partner for what I want.
- ___ 5. I wish my partner was more willing to share his/her feelings with me.
- ___ 6. Sometimes I have trouble believing everything my partner tells me.
- ___ 7. Sometimes my partner does not understand how I feel.
- ___ 8. I am very satisfied with how my partner and I talk with each other.
- ___ 9. I do not always share negative feelings I have about my partner because I fear he/she will get angry.
- ___ 10. My partner is a good listener.

COUPLE SATISFACTION

How satisfied are you with:

- ___ 1. I am not pleased with the personality characteristics and personal habits of my partner.
- ___ 2. I am very happy with how we handle role responsibilities in our marriage.
- ___ 3. I am not happy about our communication and feel my partner does not understand me.
- ___ 4. I am very happy about how we make our decisions and resolve conflicts.
- ___ 5. I am unhappy about our financial position and the way we make financial decisions.
- ___ 6. I am very happy with how we manage our leisure activities and the time we spend together.
- ___ 7. I am very pleased about how we express affection and relate sexually.
- ___ 8. I am not satisfied with the way we each handle our responsibilities as parents.
- ___ 9. I am dissatisfied about our relationship with my parents, in-laws, and/or friends.
- ___ 10. I feel very good about how we each practice our religious beliefs and values.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

ID # _____

FAMILY MEMBER _____

DATE TAKEN _____

Center for Family Services
103 Human Environmental Sciences West
Stillwater, OK 74078
(405)744-5058

COUPLE RELATIONSHIP

Please indicate how you would describe your couple relationship as it is now:

Almost Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1	2	3	4	5

- _____ 1. We ask each other for help.
- _____ 2. When problems arise, we compromise.
- _____ 3. We approve of each other's friends.
- _____ 4. We are flexible in how we handle our differences.
- _____ 5. We like to do things with each other.
- _____ 6. Different persons act as leaders in our marriage.
- _____ 7. We feel closer to each other than to people outside our marriage.
- _____ 8. We change our way of handling tasks.
- _____ 9. We like to spend free time with each other.
- _____ 10. We try new ways of dealing with problems.
- _____ 11. We feel very close to each other.
- _____ 12. We jointly make the decisions in our marriage.
- _____ 13. We share hobbies and interests together.
- _____ 14. Rules change in our marriage.
- _____ 15. We can easily think of things to do together as a couple.
- _____ 16. We shift household responsibilities from person to person.
- _____ 17. We consult each other on our decisions.
- _____ 18. It is hard to identify who the leader is in our marriage.
- _____ 19. Togetherness is a top priority.
- _____ 20. It is hard to tell who does which household chores.

APPENDIX D

Diagnosis and Treatment Plan

Case # _____

DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT PLAN

Date of First Session _____ Diagnosis for Session _____

Family's Definition of the Problem:

Diagnosis:

Family Member Diagnosed:

Axis I: Clinical Disorders or Other Conditions That May Be a Focus of Clinical Attention

_____. _____
_____. _____

Axis II: Personality Disorders or Mental Retardation

_____. _____

Axis III: General Medical Conditions

_____. _____

Axis IV: Psychosocial and Environmental Problems (check applicable and specify)

Problems with primary support group: _____

Problems related to the social environment: _____

Educational problems: _____

Occupational problems: _____

Economic problems: _____

Housing problems: _____

Problems with access to health care services: _____

Problems related to interaction with the legal system/crime: _____

Other psychosocial and environmental problems: _____

Axis V: Global Assessment of Functioning

GAF = _____

Proposed Treatment:

Therapist

Therapist

Supervisor

Date

APPENDIX E
Case Summary Form

Case # _____

SUMMARY OF CLINICAL CONTACT

Date of Contact _____

Session No. _____

Type of Contact: *Session* *Phone Call* *Other:* _____

Length of Contact: *1 hour* *Other* _____

Clients Present:

Circle if: *Live supervised* *Videotaped* *Reflecting Team* *Other how* _____

Brief Discussion of Process & Content

Home Work:

Issues of Concern:

Plans for Next Session:

Modifications to Treatment Plan:

Supervision Notes:

Next Appointment:

Time:

Therapist

Therapist

Supervisor

*Center for Family Services, 103 Human Environmental Sciences West, Stillwater, OK 74078.
(405) 744-5058.*

APPENDIX F

Counseling Agreement Form

CENTER FOR FAMILY SERVICES

103 Human Environmental Sciences West

Stillwater, OK 74078

(405) 744-5058

Counseling Agreement

The Oklahoma State University Center for Family Services is dedicated to the treatment of families and the training of skilled family therapists. In an effort to offer clients the best therapy possible, the Center's family-oriented approach includes observation by fellow therapists-in-training, video-taping and diagnostic evaluation, if deemed appropriate.

I (We), the undersigned, do consent to the observation and video-taping of my (our) therapy sessions. I (We) understand that I (we) may request the tape turned off or erased at any time either during my (our) session(s) or any time thereafter. I (We) understand that any video-tapes will be used to assist the therapist(s) in working with me (us) to improve the quality of therapy that I (we) receive. I (We) understand that I (we) will not be video-taped without our verbal consent, at the time of taping, and that all video-tapes of sessions are erased immediately following viewing by my (our) therapists. I (We) acknowledge the importance of research in increasing the effectiveness of therapy and in training high quality therapists. I (We) do consent to any research that may be completed through the clinic on my (our) case. We understand that names are never used in research and that the Center for Family Services guarantees the confidentiality of our records.

Since OSU is an educational institution, I (we) recognize that any counseling, testing, taping, or diagnostic work will be seen by the clinical supervisor and may be used by the supervisor for training purposes. No information about me (us) may be given to any person outside the Center without my (our) written consent or a court subpoena. However, if I (we) am (are) dangerous to myself or others, I (we) am (are) aware that mental health professionals have the responsibility to report information to appropriate persons with or without my (our) permission.

I (We) agree to notify the Center for Family Services at least 24 hours in advance should I (we) need to cancel an appointment. If not, a fee for services will still be charged. Payment for services is due when services are rendered. I (We) understand this fee to be \$ _____ per session. When I (we) decide to discontinue therapy, I (we) agree to discuss this with the therapist(s) at a regular therapy session, not by phone.

I (We) understand that should I (we) attend a therapy session impaired by alcohol or drug use that the session will be terminated and another session scheduled for a future time. This event will be treated as a missed session and charged a full fee.

I (We) am (are) aware that the Oklahoma State University Center for Family Services is not an emergency service, and, that in an emergency situation if I (we) cannot reach my (our) therapist, I (we) have been advised to contact my (our) local community health center or another crisis counseling center.

My (our) rights and responsibilities as client(s) of the Center for Family Services and the procedures and treatment modalities used have been explained to me (us) and I (we) understand and agree to them.

(Name)

(Name)

(Name)

(Name)

(Witness)

(Date)

APPENDIX G

Institutional Review Board Consent

Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 6/8/01

Date: Thursday, June 08, 2000

IRB Application No: HE00170

Proposal Title: THE RELATIONSHIP OF CONFLICT TO THE NEGOTIATION OF EMOTIONAL
CLOSENESS AND DISTANCE IN MARRIAGE

Principal
Investigator(s)

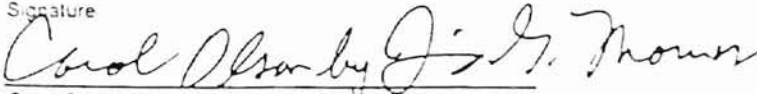
Melissa Griffin
123 Melrose Dr
Stillwater, OK 74074

Charles Hendrix
333 HES
Stillwater, OK 74074

Reviewed and
Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Signature



Carol Olson, Director of University Research Compliance

Thursday, June 08, 2000

Date

Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modifications to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval with the advisor's signature. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

VITA

Melissa K. Griffin

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: THE RELATIONSHIP OF CONFLICT TO THE NEGOTIATION OF
EMOTIONAL CLOSENESS AND DISTANCE IN MARRIAGE

Major Field: Family Relations and Child Development

Specialization: Marriage and Family Therapy

Biographical:

Born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, on March 4, 1975, the
daughter of Danny and Pamela Goodman. Wife of Robert C. Griffin.

Education:

Graduated from Yukon High School, Yukon, Oklahoma in May of
1993; received a Bachelor of Science degree in Family Relations and
Child Development, minor in Sociology from Oklahoma State University,
Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 1997; Completed requirements for the
Masters of Science Degree in Family Relations and Child Development,
from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December 2000.

Experience:

Senior Counselor at Stillwater Domestic Violence Services Inc.,
Stillwater, Oklahoma from December 1999 to present and intern and
shelter intake worker from June 1996 to August 1996. Therapy Intern at
Canadian County Health Department, Yukon, Oklahoma from May 1999 to
December 1999. Therapy Intern at Center for Family Services, Stillwater,
Oklahoma from June 1998 to March 2000. Graduate Recruiter for the
Department of Family Relations and Child Development, Stillwater,
Oklahoma from January 1998 to December 1999.

Professional Affiliations:

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (1998-2000)
Oklahoma Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (1998-2000)