

AUTONOMY AND INTIMACY IN THE
FAMILY OF ORIGIN AND AGE
AS RELATED TO SPOUSAL
FUSION IN MARRIED
INDIVIDUALS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Each member in a family has her/his own sense of identity which is influenced by her/his sense of belonging to or being separate from that specific family (Minuchin, 1974). The family is the laboratory in which one's sense of belongingness and separateness are mixed and dispensed and form the matrix of an identity (Minuchin, 1974).

Parents are often unaware of how much they serve as models for their children. Awareness of the importance of their roles as models for their children is often restricted to individual roles such as the roles of woman, man, wife, husband, mother, father (Lewis, 1979). However, children observe their parents interacting, relating, arguing, teasing, comforting, and expressing feelings. These and other exchanges between the parents are likely to influence the developing children. Life in the family of origin is a constant process of interactions between members of the whole family: mother-father, parent-child, child-child, and family member-friend. Patterns of interaction are developed and they tend to persist throughout the life cycle of the

family (Lewis, 1979).

Patterns of family interaction fall somewhere along the continuum between fusion or enmeshment and disengagement (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1980). Fused families have a strong sense of "we-ness" with family members being overly concerned and overly involved in each other's lives. Enmeshed families have no clear boundaries. Boundaries of a subsystem are the rules defining who participates, and how they will participate. The term enmeshed/fused is used to describe a person's embeddedness in, or undifferentiation within, the relational context (Karpel, 1976). On the other hand, persons from disengaged families operate by over-emphasizing the "I-ness" and are more separate, with little family loyalty. In optimally functioning families there are clear boundaries between people, giving each family member a sense of "I-ness" along with an ingroup sense of "we" or "us" (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1980). This means that each individual in a family retains their own identity and has a sense of belongingness to their family. The boundaries in a high functioning family are clear and well defined (Minuchin, 1979).

Berman and Lief (1975) identify intimacy or a sense of togetherness/belongingness as a critical interpersonal variable in describing marital relationships. Erikson (1950) states that the intimacy stage occurs in young adults. The virtue (a human quality that is the outgrowth of successful resolution of conflicts) of love comes into

being during the intimacy stage of development. The perception of her or his parents' level of intimacy thought to influence a person's own interpersonal relationships (Waring, 1984). Rubln (1983) says that people hunger for intimacy. Waring, McElrath, Lefcoe, & Welsz (1981) state that intimacy is the interpersonal dimension which most determines marital adjustment. Furthermore, Waring et al. (1980) and Olson & Schaefer (1977) say that the concept of intimacy has been variously defined as a process, a state, or a trait.

It appears that the modal family arrangement in contemporary American society is the modified extended family (Cohler, 1983). Goldfarb (1965, 1969) stated that the mother-child tie during infancy and early childhood is prototypic of personal relationships across the course of life and that psychological autonomy rather than interdependence is the optimal mode of adjustment among adults. The development of attachment, and of the child's tie to the mother, has been approached from several perspectives including learning theory, ethnology, and psychoanalysis. The ethnological approach assumes that the child's attachment to the caretaker becomes increasingly organized across the first year of life. This approach is consistent with more recent life-course formulations which maintain that the sense of well-being resulting from a specific tie to the mother represents the prototype of attachment across the course of life (Antonucci, 1976;

Lerner & Ryff, 1978; Troll, 1980). With the toddler's increased locomotion, the child begins to build autonomy (Cohler, 1983). The problem with both the attachment and separation-individuation formulations is that they cannot account for the degree of interdependence which is characteristic of the multigenerational family unit and which, at least through middle age, is of such importance in fostering positive adjustment among adults (Bowen, 1978). Personal autonomy and identity cannot be understood apart from the family as a whole (Handel, 1967). Erikson (1963) suggests that autonomy takes place in the second stage of life when the child learns what is expected, what its obligations and privileges are and what limitations are placed upon it. Adults should encourage the child to experience situations that require the autonomy of free choice. Freedom of self-expression and lovingness, a good sense of self (good feelings and pride) promote a sense of autonomy. However, a sense of loss of self-control can cause a lasting feeling of shame and doubt (Erikson, 1963). Furthermore, autonomy is seen as a characteristic of healthier families. As children mature and grow in the context of a healthy family, so does their autonomy.

The life cycle concept in simplest terms encapsulates the idea that all individuals go through a series of periods or stages during life with each period having characteristic patterns. Erikson (1980) put forth his epigenetic (human growth unfold in stages in a sequence) concept and

delineated eight psychological stages from infancy to old age. Erikson (1963) states that intimacy develops in young adulthood (in the early twenties). This is Erikson's sixth stage, which follows the formation of a personal identity. Williamson (1981) states that it is necessary to terminate the hierarchical boundary between the first and second generations in order to complete the task of leaving the parental home, which he says takes place in an individual's the fourth decade of life. Williamson's notion of hierarchical boundary refers to the order of persons by age in a family, such as grandparents, parents and self. This is also what Williamson refers to as the transgenerational family system or three generational family system.

Several instruments have been developed to measure intimacy, autonomy, and enmeshment/fusion in such areas as family of origin and spousal relationships. The instruments have been designed to assist a therapist in gaining more insight into the particular client's past (family of origin) or present (spousal relationship). There are currently two that are noteworthy: the Family-of-Origin Scale developed by Hovestadt, Anderson, Piercy, Cochran, & Fine (1983) that assists persons in becoming more conscious of their own perception of the level of health of the family in which they spent most of their childhood, and the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire (Bray, Williamson & Malone, 1984) which assesses important relationships in the three-generational family system. The

issues that these two instruments address are commonly discussed in marital and family therapy. Through the use of these instruments, individuals may become more aware of their roles in their family of origin and their related ability to form an intimate relationship with a spouse. These instruments allow the person to recognize how they developed through the influence of their parents, and to consider whether to alter former patterns that existed in their family-of-origin so that they can form a more intimate relationship with a spouse. In an attempt to focus on these issues concerning fusion, intimacy, and autonomy, this study will examine the relationships between these elements, as well as the correlation between the two noteworthy instruments in this area of inquiry.

Definition of Terms

1. Fusion: Extreme form of proximity and intensity in family interactions in which members are overconcerned and overinvolved in each other's lives and the boundaries of the subsystems are blurred (weak and easily crossed).
2. Spousal Fusion: Degree to which a person operates in a fused manner in relationship with a spouse (Bray, Williamson & Malone, 1984). In other words, the lack of clarity in boundaries between spouses.
3. Intimacy: Dimension of voluntary close, affectionate bonds among people who are autonomous and differentiated

from their family of origin and maintain their own separate identity. A person who has successfully resolved intimacy issues can communicate with others and express feelings.

4. Intimacy (adopted by the authors of the FOS): Intimacy is developed by encouraging the expression of feelings, creating a warm atmosphere in the home, dealing with conflicts without undue stress, promoting empathy among family members and building a sense of trust (Hovestadt, 1985).

5. Intergenerational Intimacy: The degree of intimacy and satisfaction with parents (Bray et al., 1984). Williamson (1981) states that intimacy occurs in the family of origin when the relationship is freely chosen and there is a closeness with distinct personal boundaries.

6. Autonomy: Based upon an individual's sense of separateness from others, along with the capacity to function independently. In addition, the person can express their own feelings and thoughts separately from others and initiate activities rather than only respond to the behavior of others.

7. Autonomy (adopted by the authors of the FOS): An emphasis on clarity of expression, personal responsibility, respect for other family members and openness to others in the family and by dealing openly with separation and loss within the family (Hovestadt, A., Anderson, W., Piercy, F., Cochran, D. & Fine, M., 1985).

Statement of the Problem

Based on the literature to date there appears to be an absence of research in the area of family of origin as related to spousal relationships, and little is known of the correlation between specific scales on specified instruments. The purpose of this study was to examine the degree to which age and levels of autonomy and intimacy within the family of origin affect level of fusion in spousal relationships. Specifically, the two questions addressed in this study were: 1. Do age, levels of autonomy and intimacy in the family of origin predict spousal fusion? 2. Do the Intimacy and Autonomy subscales of the Family-of-Origin Scale correlate the Spousal Fusion/Individuation and Intergenerational Intimacy subscales on the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire?

Significance of the Study

Horowitz (1979) has documented that problems with intimacy constitute the largest single cluster of problem behaviors for which outpatients seek psychotherapy. Individuals from fused families of origin are among the group of people seeking therapy (Fisher & Sprenkle, 1978). Fusion seen in adult couples is described as two minimally

individuated persons forming a close relationship. Frequently the people involved in these marriages have lowered self-esteem and have not individuated from their family of origin. Often these marriages function on what the children provide to the family (Framo, 1965). It has been suggested that opportunities for intimacy are necessary for optimal family functioning (Bray et al., 1984; Hovestadt et al., 1985; Lewis, Beavers, Gossett & Phillips, 1976). Despite the persistence of the myth that each person is an autonomous individual who controls her/his own destiny, there is increasing evidence that, "man is not as separate from her/his family, from those about her/him, and from her/his multigenerational past as she/he has fancied her/himself to be" (Bowen, 1975, p. 369). Validation of self by a reference group, particularly the family, is vital to all family members and is especially important for children who are in the process of forming identities, self-images they will carry forward into adult lives as they form other families (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1980). Furthermore, a sense of autonomy adds to a more positive sense of self (Fasick, 1984). Both the development of autonomous and intimate relationships come from being a part of healthier families since these characteristics signify health (Hovestadt, 1983). Furthermore, Offer and Sabshin (1974) suggest that intimacy occurs in young adulthood (early twenties). This implies that there is much importance placed on chronological age, and what is to be

accomplished prior to certain ages/stages in a person's life.

Based on the information that has been offered to date, there is a shortage of empirical studies on the effects the family of origin on spousal relationships, and comparisons between the Family-of-Origin Scale (FOS) and the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire (PAFS-Q). This study provided this type of information, as well as information relevant to married couples concerning their own perception of their family of origin and characteristics of their relationship with a spouse. In addition, this study examined the issues surrounding people that perceived their relationships in their family of origin as intimate and autonomous, and the degree to which they experience fusion in their relationship with a spouse. This type of information was derived from the correlations between some of the scales on the FOS and the PAFS-Q. Furthermore, this type of information may assist a couple that is seeking marital therapy. It could bring their attention to secondary issues surrounding the major reasons that brought the couple initially into therapy.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the findings discussed previously and on the research questions, the following hypotheses are formulated with an alpha level of .05:

General hypothesis 1 - Ho : Age, levels of intimacy, and autonomy in the family of origin are significant predictors of spousal fusion in married individuals.

The following hypotheses are derived from hypothesis number one:

Ho 1: There is a significant relationship between spousal fusion and age.

Ho 2: There is a significant relationship between spousal fusion and intimacy in the family of origin.

Ho 3: There is a significant relationship between spousal fusion and autonomy in the family of origin.

General Hypothesis 2 - Ho: Based on the findings discussed previously and on the research questions, the Autonomy and Intimacy scales from the Family-of-Origin Scale are significantly correlated with the Spousal Fusion/Individuation and Intergenerational Intimacy scales from the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire.

Limitations

The following are limitations in this study:

1) The subjects participating in this study were members of one of three churches in a community, which may limit the generalizability of the results.

2) The questionnaire approach distances the researcher from the sample, somewhat limiting the researcher's knowledge of the participants.

Organization of the Study

Chapter I included an introduction to the problem, the significance of the study, a statement of the problem, definition of terms, and hypotheses, and limitations of the study. Chapter II includes a review of related literature. Chapter III describes the research design and method, the selection and description of subjects, instrumentation, data collection, and analysis. Chapter IV contains the results of the data analysis. Chapter V includes the summary and discussion of the results, the conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The following review will begin with a presentation of research findings about the relationship between family of origin and the development of a person's ability to relate to other individuals. Findings related to age, intimacy and autonomy in the family of origin will also be reported. Currently there appears to be a lack of empirical research examining the significance between marital relationships and the family of origin (Stinnett & Sauer, 1977; Travis & Travis, 1975), although some authors have developed theoretical perspectives concerning these areas (Boszormenyi-Nagy, 1965; Bowen, 1983; Minuchin, 1981). Fisher & Sprenkle (1978) state that many concepts are overlapping and redundant, and that there has been little attempt to integrate them.

Individual survival requires group membership; this is inherent in the human condition (Yalom, 1975). People have survived in all societies by belonging to social aggregates.

In different cultures these aggregates vary in their level of organization and differentiation (Minuchin, 1978). Family has always undergone changes that parallel society's changes. Today's American family is in a state of transition. It has taken over or given up the functions of protecting and socializing its members in response to the culture's needs. Family functions serve two different ends. One is internal - the psychosocial protection of its members; and the other is external - the accommodation to a culture and the transmission of that culture (Lewis, 1979). Akutagawa (1981) says that as a culture evolves, some of its institutions and mores undergo modification. Human practices and attitudes change. The family is under attack by different people. The feminist movement suggests that the family is an entrenchment of male chauvinism. The nuclear family is viewed as an organization that cannot help but produce little girls reared to be wives in the doll house, and little boys who will be just as trapped in outmoded patterns.

Most people consider a strong, satisfying family life among their most important aspirations (Blood, 1969). Unfortunately, there is little guidance concerning how to achieve a successful family life (Stinnett & Sauer, 1977). In urban industrial areas, society has intruded forcefully on the family, taking over many functions that were once considered the family's duties (Minuchin, 1981). The old now live apart, in old people's homes or in housing developments

for senior citizens. The woman's responsibilities concerning work has been drastically curtailed by modern technology, which has changed tasks necessary for the survival of the family unit (Franks & Burtle, 1984). Conditions that allow or require both spouses to work outside the family create situations in which the extrafamilial network may heighten and exacerbate conflict between the spouses.

In the presence of all these changes, modern people still adhere to a set of values that belong to a different society, one in which the boundaries between the family and the extrafamilial were clearly delineated (Minuchin, 1981). The adherence to an outmoded model leads to the labeling of many situations that are clearly transitional as pathological and pathogenic (Minuchin, 1974). The touchstone for family life is still the legendary "and so they were married and lived happily ever after". It is no wonder that any family falls short of this ideal. The state of the world is in transition, and the family must accommodate to it or change with it. Only the family, society's smallest unit, can change and yet maintain enough continuity to rear children who will not be "strangers in a strange land," who will be rooted firmly enough to grow and to adapt.

In all cultures, the family imprints its members with selfhood (Lewis, 1979). In the early process of socialization, families mold and program the child's behavior and sense of identity. The sense of belonging

comes with an accommodation on the child's part to the family groups and with her/his assumption of transactional patterns in the family structure that are consistent throughout different life events.

A family is far more than a collection of individuals occupying a specific physical and psychological space together (Bloch, 1976). Rather, it is a natural social system, with properties all its own, one that has evolved a set of rules, roles, a power structure, forms of communication, and ways of negotiation and problem solving that allow various tasks to be performed effectively (Fasick, 1984). It is believed that every human being's sense of identity is largely dependent on the validation of self by a reference group, particularly the family or family substitute (Minuchin, Rosman, & Baker, 1978; Minuchin, 1981). Validation from the family is especially important for children who are in the process of forming identities, self-images they will carry forward into adult lives as they form other families. The family's ability to function has tremendous implications on how individuals develop and function for the rest of their lives (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1980). When a parent's behavior is interpreted as rejection, desertion or persecution, the child handles the frustration by internalizing aspects of the loved-hated parents (Framo, 1976). The child relates to the rest of the world (including, in time, to spouses) in a similar fashion. The relationship problems that adults have

with their spouses and children are seen to be reconstructions and elaborations of earlier conflict paradigms from the family of origin. The child's family transactional patterns form the matrix within which the psychological growth of members takes place (Minuchin, 1974). In other words, every member's identity is influenced by the sense of belonging to a specific family (Minuchin, 1974). Nancy Coleman is a Coleman, and throughout her life she will be the daughter of Jeanne and Harry. This is an important factor in her existence. That Jeanne is the mother of Nancy is an important factor in Nancy's life. Wright (1985) states that there is something comforting in the physical reality of transmitted genes, family names, beliefs, values and cultures carrying on through another individual. Each person experiences both a sense of belonging and a sense of being separate in families.

There has been much attention paid to what have been called fused or enmeshed relationships and to related processes of differentiation/individuation/autonomy (Karpel, 1976). Stierlin (1979) clarifies the issue of fusion as a struggle to balance separateness and togetherness. For a woman, the fusion of identities and the struggle in which she engages to break those bonds foretells the future of her adult emotional relationships (Rubin, 1983). Chodorow (1978) states, "the basic feminine sense of self is connected to others in the world" and "the basic masculine sense of self is separate". Maintaining her own

separateness in a relationship is one that a woman works on constantly. The struggle with fusion due to child development as a female or male is in addition to the problems that develop in families due to unclear boundaries between the parents and children. Minuchin (1974) says when families are low on adaptability, they are characterized as rigid. This would occur in a fused family that does not allow much flexibility in the system.

Every family is a system unto itself with several subsystems. Each person belongs to different subsystems in which there are different levels of power (DeMan, 1982). The clarity of boundaries (Minuchin, 1974) within a family is a useful parameter for the evaluation of family functioning. Clear boundaries suggest an optimally functioning family (intimate and autonomous), while weak and poorly differentiated boundaries suggest enmeshment (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1980). Bowen (1971) describes enmeshment as an undifferentiated family ego mass. He further states that it is the conglomerate emotional oneness that exists in all levels of intensity. The emotional closeness can be so intense that family members know each other's feelings, thoughts, fantasies and dreams. The boundaries of a subsystem are the rules defining who participates, how they participate, and who protects the differentiation of the system (Minuchin, 1975). Fogarty (1976) states that as people move closer to one another, the level of emotionality between them rises, and so does the

level of expectation. Furthermore, each person finds it difficult to remain close, and at the same time maintain a space between her/himself and others, so people tend to fuse or blend into each other. The force behind fusion is the desperate hope of filling one's emptiness by uniting with or taking something from the other. Emptiness (being without or alone) expects to be filled by emptiness (Fogarty, 1976). Over the lifetime of the relationship, the identity of each person is blurred (Karpel, 1976). Individuals speak for one another, make decisions for each other and the boundaries of both people overlap. Confusion arises about what one should get from her/himself, and what from others, with loss of identification and differentiation (Fogarty, 1976). The reaction to fusion is distance; the twosome (fusion and disengagement/distance) ping-pong back and forth between fusion and distance. Often, one becomes the pursuer, trying to fill her/his emptiness from the other, and the other person will distance, moving her/his personal dimension away from the pursuer and toward work or a girl/boyfriend (Minuchin, 1974). It is apparent that many individuals struggle with the fusion/intimacy dilemma from many different standpoints throughout their lifetime.

Most families have enmeshed and disengaged subsystems at some point in time (Minuchin, 1981). The symbiotic relationship between a mother and child is an example of a fragment of one of the most intense versions of enmeshment (Bowen, 1965). Minuchin (1981) refers to an enmeshed

relationship as each family member having a sense of "we-ness" and an absence of an "I-ness". Each family member is involved at a different level. The basic notion to be conveyed is that of an emotional process that shifts about within the nuclear family (father, mother and children) ego mass in definite patterns of emotional responsiveness (Bowen, 1971). Furthermore, the degree to which any one family member may be involved depends on her basic level of involvement in the family ego mass. In periods of stress there is likely to be more involvement, and when there is calmness this type of involvement may be relegated to a small section of the family, such as a symbiotic relationship between a mother and her daughter (Bowen, 1965).

Spousal Fusion

Research related to fused marital relationships appears to show that the family of origin has a major impact on the person's ability to form a relationship with a spouse (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1980). Karpel (1976) states that when fusion is applied to adult couples, it refers to two minimally individuated persons forming a close intimate relationship. The defining characteristic of the relationship is the high degree of identification that exists between partners.

Akutagawa (1981) states that we choose partners whom we

can hold at arm's length, as well as those that are frequently complementary. Dependent partners select partners that are dominant. Virginia Satir (1983) elaborates and says that spouses' devaluing of one another in front of the child results in lowered self-esteem for the child, if she/he identifies or disidentifies with the devalued parent. In turn, lowered self-esteem leads to anxious attachment and to later failures to separate from family of origin. It has also been stated that we select mates that are at the same individuation level from their family of origin (Satir, 1983). Furthermore, lowered self-esteem leads to mate selection based on limited information, covert needs to be parented by the spouse, and inadequate self-disclosure during courtship (Satir, 1983). In some poorly differentiated families, the marriage exists largely on the basis of what the children provide (Framo, 1965). Boszormenyi-Nagy (1983) says that the loyalty of a child may be misused by parents to "make up for" what they did not receive from their own parents. In low self-esteem couples, individuality (differentness) is submerged, and open disagreement is avoided, so that marital conflicts remain unresolved. In addition, in marriages where there is low self-esteem, love and total agreement are viewed as synonymous by the spouses, and there is little trust as is true in fused families (Bowen, 1983; Satir, 1983).

Fogarty (1974) has used the metaphor of two magnets to describe a couple's attempts to find an optimal distance

between them. He suggests the couple should feel close enough to feel the emotional tug without fusing. The metaphor is helpful in suggesting a midground between fusion and lack of relation. Karpel (1976) refers to a three stage developmental process: immature, transitional and mature. The immature stage rigidly eliminates one pole (we or I), in the transitional stage the person experiences both a "we" and an "I", and in the mature stage both the "we" and the "I" are integrated in such a way to nourish each other.

A number of theoretical approaches pertaining to fusion within the family of origin have been postulated. Rubin (1983) states that the fusion of identities and the struggle a person engages in to break those bonds foretells the future of their adult emotional relationships. Satir (1964) says that parents are the architects of the family and the marriage relationship is the key to all other family relationships.

Intimacy

Intimacy: We hunger for it, but we also fear it. We move toward it and then back off (approach-avoidance dance) (Rubin, 1983). Intimacy has also been described as "go away a little closer" (Rubin, 1983, p. 65). Intimacy as an important aspect of interpersonal relationships has been widely accepted (Erikson, 1950; Sullivan, 1953). In the broad context, an understanding of the role of intimacy has

been discussed as essential to the development of a science of interpersonal relationships (Hinde, 1978). Rapoport (1974) and Glick & Kessler (1974) suggest that in order to develop dyadic closeness, young marrieds must first relinquish strong emotional ties with significant others, including the family of origin. A strong sense of personal identity is viewed as a prerequisite to the capacity for intimacy in the development theory of Erikson (1964). Describing the adolescent process of developing and solidifying a mature identity, Erikson noted that this developmental task involves "falling in love" as "an attempt to arrive at a definition of one's identity by projecting one's diffused ego image on another and by seeing it thus reflected and gradually clarified".

Many authors have supported the theory that women want intimacy and men do not. Chodorow (1978) says that the basic feminine self is connected to (others in) the world and that the basic masculine sense of self is separate. Therefore women remain more preoccupied with relational issues and give themselves more easily to emotional relationships and men tend to tend to be startled by these emotions. A woman's boundaries can easily be breached, making it difficult for her to maintain herself as a separate person in the context of an intimate relationship (Rubin, 1983). Men have difficulties with the issue of unity. The problem in their emotional relationships is allowing another to penetrate the boundaries sufficiently to

establish the unity that is necessary for a deep and sustained intimacy with another person (Rubin, 1983). As children, boys learn that connecting words with feelings is difficult and frightening. It threatens to provoke conflict or vulnerability (Halpern, 1976). Parents frequently model that it is okay for women to express emotion, and for men to express logic. Furthermore, boys are trained to camouflage their feelings under cover of an exterior of calm, strength and rationality. Fears are not manly and fantasies are not rational. Above all, emotions are not for the strong, the sane, the adult (Rubin, 1983). In summary, women have a difficult time maintaining the boundaries, while men have a rough time allowing a person to cross through the boundaries.

Intimacy is identified as a critical interpersonal variable in describing marital relationships (Berman & Lief, 1975). A person's role model for intimacy exists in their family of origin (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1980). The term describes a quality of relationship between two or more people. Lewis (1979) says that it describes those moments when there has occurred a disclosure of deep and private feelings and thoughts. People can communicate at different levels at different times. The most superficial level is the most common. At a more personal level, everyday feelings are expressed, such as sadness, joy, disappointment, jealousy, fear, excitement, and anger, as well as others. There is, for many, a sense of exposure or vulnerability

associated with this level (Rubin, 1983). Satir (1964) says that communication skill or the lack of it has been considered a primary discriminator between health and pathology in couples. Communication is achieved not only within the family, but also with a circle of close friends. Most people enter adulthood with at least a beginning capacity for intimacy, but it may indeed develop (Hall & Lindzey, 1978). Young adults are capable of committing themselves to a joint relationship in which their mode of life is mutually shared with an intimate partner. Erikson (1964) states, "Love then, is mutuality of devotion forever subduing the antagonisms inherent in divided function." Although one's individual identity is maintained in a joint intimacy relationship, one's ego strength is dependent upon the mutual partner who is prepared to share in the rearing of children, the productivity, and the ideology of their relationship.

Autonomy

Autonomy is seen as a healthy characteristic that develops in individuals when there is emphasis placed on clarity of expression, personal responsibility, respect for family members, and openness with others (Hovestadt et al., 1985). As the child and the family grow together, the accommodation of the family to the child's needs delimits areas of autonomy that she/he experiences as separateness

(Minuchin, 1974). Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt is the second stage in Erikson's theory of development. It occurs around the age of 2 or 3 years old. Erikson (1964) says a sense of autonomy and self-control is engendered if parents guide their children's behavior gradually and firmly. When this is predominantly the treatment, children experience an increased sense of pride in their accomplishments and good feelings toward others (De Man, 1982). The child should be encouraged to experience situations that require the autonomy of free choice, promoting freedom of self-expression and lovingness (Hall & Lindzey, 1978). It is assumed that an attachment tie, leading to the formation of dependence upon the mother, will develop if properly supported during certain critical periods during early childhood (Cohler, 1983). In Mahler's (1968) earlier studies she found that symbiotic psychosis, among children who seemed unable to separate from their mothers and to have merged with them, leads to psychological fusion of mother and child. Furthermore, Mahler (1968) found that in a number of stages across the first three years of life there is a resolution of fusion which results in the more or less successful development of psychological autonomy. Olson, Sprenkle & Russell (1979) describe fusion as an overidentification with the family that results in extreme bonding and limited individual autonomy.

The normal mother-child fusion is interrupted by the toddler's increased mobility, which leads to the realization

that mother and child are indeed not a single entity (Cohler, 1983). Fairbairn (1952) and Guntrip (1961) similarly portray a developmental line from infantile to mature dependence, with increasing psychic autonomy from the caretaker, leading to stable ego-identifications and psychological independence. Freud's (1965) discussion of the developmental line of dependency to emotional self-reliance also assumes increased object constancy and psychic autonomy across early childhood.

Kahlil Gibran speaks about an autonomous marriage in the following manner:

Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone. Even as the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver with the same music. And stand together yet not too near together; For the pillars of the temple stand apart, And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow. But let there be spaces in your togetherness. And let the winds of the heavens dance between you (19p. 20).

Age

Blanck and Blanck (1968) have viewed marriage/intimacy as a developmental phase of adult life. Erikson (1968) views life in a developmental format with intimacy beginning to form between the ages of 20 and 24 years of age (young adulthood).

Williamson (1982) says that during the fourth decade of life it is important to terminate the hierarchical boundary between the adult persons and their older parents.

Specifically he states that "it is a radical renegotiation of the power structures in the relationships between the two generations, and in the interactional political patterns which ensue from these" (Williamson, 1981, p. 441). By terminating this power structure, it allows an individual to form more intimate relationships with their spouse/nuclear family.

Akutagawa (1981) states that young people choose a person for a marital partner who will not be too emotionally intimate because identity boundaries are so delicate, and that with maturity the boundaries are firmer so that greater tolerance for intimacy exists. Furthermore, as such tolerance increases, so does the need for more intimacy.

Several authors (Sheehy, 1974; Gould, 1972; Erikson, 1968) state that specific issues in identity development come to the fore throughout the adult life span. These issues entail introspection, working through, and resolution. Offer and Sabshin (1974) suggest that in early adulthood, accomplishments on certain intellectual or educational tasks (e.g., finishing high school) and the attainment of certain psychological capacities (e.g., identity, intimacy) have taken place.

Summary

The related literature section presented an overview of theories related to the family of origin and its influence

on spousal relationships. The development of intimate and autonomous relationships comes from living in a healthier family of origin. Furthermore, importance is placed on chronological age with the development of intimacy.

Families mold a child's behavior and sense of self. The family's ability to function has a tremendous impact on how an individual develops and functions in relationships throughout their life. This information appears to support the idea that the family of origin and age have an effect on spousal relationships.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter consists of a presentation and description of the methods and procedures that were utilized in this investigation. The selection of subjects for the study is detailed along with a demographic description of the sample. Instruments used in the study are described as well. The procedures for data collection and analysis are also discussed.

Subject Selection

Ninety subjects were involved in this study and represented a sample of members from three churches in a midwestern college town with a population of approximately 50,000 people. It is felt that a sample such as this would consist of a diverse group of people including a range in age, professions, gender, and socioeconomic background. The sample consisted of married females and males who live together in a heterosexual relationship. Furthermore, the subjects (based on general characteristics) were primarily

from middle class socioeconomic backgrounds and were involved in a variety of professions including: business, religion, education homemaking, counseling/therapy, student, government, library sciences, medical or retired. The subjects were volunteers who agreed to participate in this study. As seen in Table 1, forty subjects were taken from Church 1, a Catholic church with 500 members. Thirty subjects were taken from Church 2, a Methodist church with 3913 members. Twenty subjects were taken from Church 3, a Unitarian church with 85 members. The researcher recognizes the sampling bias since subjects were solicited strictly from a group of volunteers from three churches, and therefore the results can only be generalized to other populations similar to these.

Of the ninety persons who served as subjects for this study, 23 were female and 17 were male from Church 1, 13 were female and 17 were male from Church 2, and 9 were female and 11 were male from Church 3. There were a total of 45 female and 45 male subjects in the study.

Twenty-two of the subjects for this study were between the ages of 18 and 29, with a median age of 25. Forty-three subjects were between 30 and 45, 17 were between the ages of 46 and 60 with median ages of 37 and 49 respectively. Finally, there were 8 subjects between the ages of 61 and 79 with a median age of 65. A copy of the demographic data questionnaire can be found in Appendix C.

In this investigation there were 4498 in the whole population, 115 in the research population and 90 in the

Table 1

Subjects Listed by Church

(N = 90)

Sex	Unitarian	Methodist	Catholic
Female	9	13	23
Male	11	17	17
Total	20	30	40

sample which exceeds the recommended case to variable ratio. Listed in Table 2 are the educational levels of the subjects that include: 19 with a high school degree, 25 with some college experience, 21 with a bachelors degree, 18 with a masters degree, and 7 with a medical doctor, doctor of laws, or other doctoral degree. In Figure I, information pertaining to occupation is presented as follows: 1 = Religious, 24 = Business (including secretarial, clerical and administration), 14 = Education, 7 = Homemaker, 5 = Counselor/Therapist, 7 = Unemployed or Retired, 12 = Student, 11 = Government, 2 = Library Science and 6 = Medical or Law.

Another important characteristic of the subjects in this investigation was that 76.7% (n = 69) were married once, 18.9% (n = 17) were married twice, 3.3% (n = 3) were married three times and 1.1% (n = 1) was married four times. Lastly, the greatest number of the subjects within one category live within 100 miles of their parents. As seen in Table 3, 35 live within 100 miles of their parent's home, 23 from 101 to 400 miles, 8 from 401 to 800 miles, 4 from 801 to 1100 miles, 4 greater than 1100 miles and 16 did not answer or felt that the question did not apply to them.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used to measure the variables of interest. The Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire (PAFS-Q) was used to measure Spousal Fusion

Table 2

Level of Education of Subjects

(N = 90)

Level of Education	Number of Subjects
High School Degree	19
Some College	25
Bachelors Degree	21
Masters Degree	18
Doctoral Degree (M.D., J. D., Ed.D., or Ph.D.)	7

Figure Caption

Figure 1 . Present occupation of subjects that participated in the study.

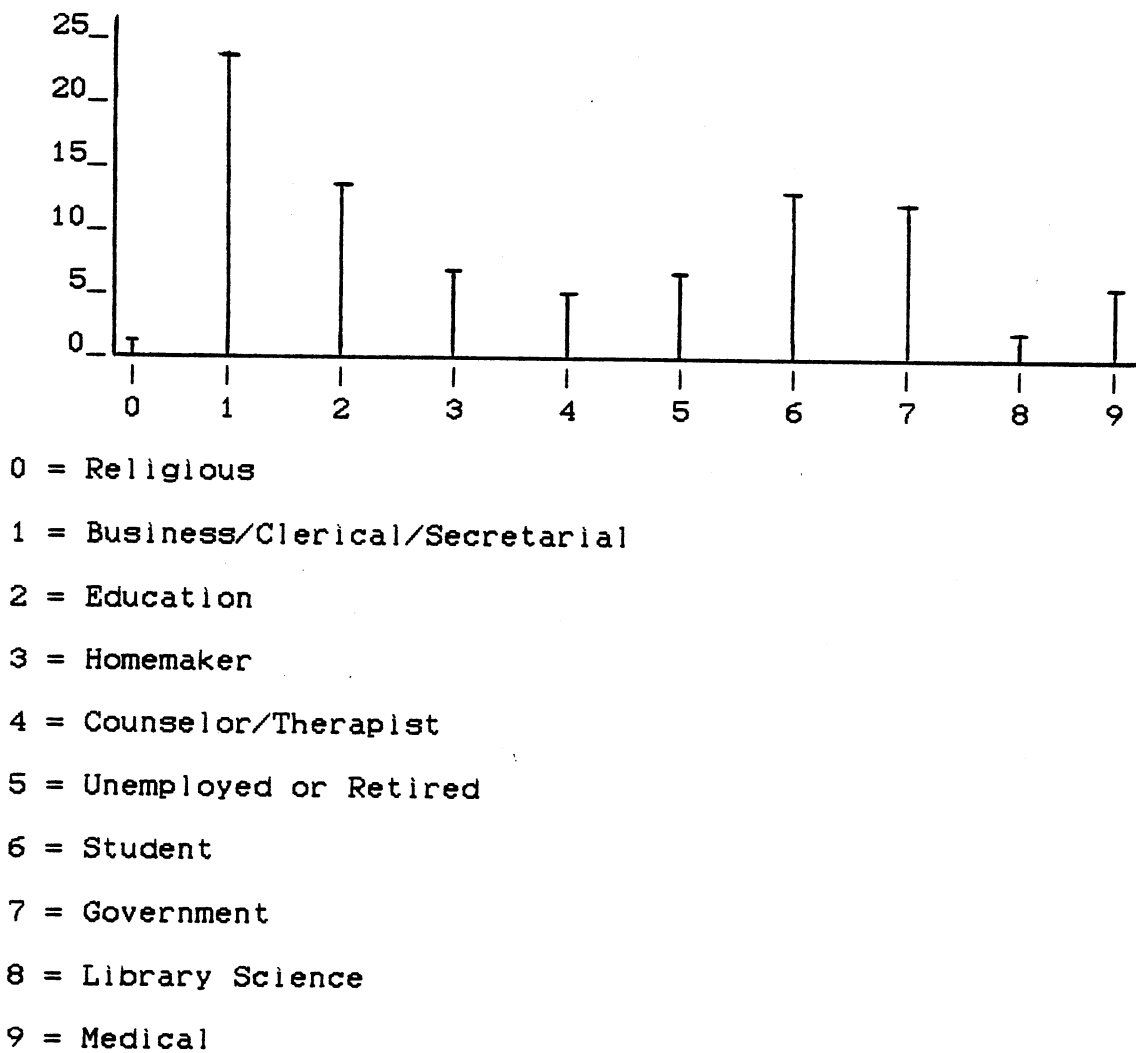


Table 3

Subjects' Distance From Parent's Home

Distance	Number of Subjects
0 - 100	35
101 - 400	23
401 - 800	8
801 - 1100	4
1100 +	4

and Intergenerational Intimacy (Bray et al., 1984). The Family-of-Origin Scale (FOS) (Hovestadt, Anderson, Piercy & Fine, 1983) was used to measure self perceived levels of health in one's family of origin, more specifically intimacy and autonomy (see appendix D for a copy of the FOS). The author of the PAFS-Q requested that a copy of the instrument not be included in this document. For further information it is suggested that the author should be contacted.

Personal Authority in the Family System

Questionnaire

The Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire (PAFS-Q) was designed by Bray, Williamson and Malone (1984) to assess important relationships in the three-generational family system. Furthermore, it was developed to measure intergenerational family relationships as perceived by the individual (Bray et al., 1984). The PAFS-Q has eight nonoverlapping subscales, which are: Spousal Intimacy (SPINT), Spousal Fusion/Individuation (SPFUS), Nuclear Family Triangulation (NFTRI), Intergenerational Intimacy (ININT), Individuation/Intergenerational Fusion (INFUS), Intergenerational Triangulation (INTRI), Intergenerational Intimidation (INTIM), and Personal Authority in the Family System (PERAUT). The Nuclear Family Triangulation scale is considered optional by Bray et al.(1984). There is no full scale score that is derived from the eight subscales. This

study utilized two of the eight scale, Spousal Fusion/Individuation and Intergenerational Intimacy. Spousal Fusion/Individuation measures the degree of intimacy and satisfaction with a mate, while Intergenerational Intimacy assesses the degree of intimacy and satisfaction with parents (Bray et al., 1984). There are three versions of the PAFS-Q: Version A is for adults with children, Version B is for adults without children, and Version C is for college students without children. This study utilized Version B since information is not needed from the Version A scale which assesses triangulation between spouses and their children.

The Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire consists of 132 items. The questionnaire was originally composed of 181 items. Some of the items were reworded, re-scaled or deleted to form the present questionnaire of 132 items (Bray et al., 1984). Each of the items is written in either a declarative or question mode and each utilizes a self-report format. Twenty items form the Spousal Fusion/Individuation subscale while twenty-five items measure Intergenerational Intimacy. A high score on Spousal Fusion/Individuation indicates more individuation or less fusion, and a high score on Intergenerational Intimacy indicates more intimacy. This means that Spousal Fusion would correlate inversely with the other scales. All of the items are rated on a five-point Likert-type scale with a variety of descriptors, such as "excellent to very poor", "very satisfied to very dissatisfied", "much less to much

more" or "all the time to never."

Norms. In the first and second studies by Bray et al. (1984), normative data were collected on two samples. In study I (Time I) there were 90 nonclinical volunteers from a local medical center community made up of students, staff, and their friends, whereas for Study II (Time II) 400 nonclinical volunteers were selected from the same local area. In the first study, individuals were between the ages of 25 and 46; while the ages ranged from 19 to 30 in the second study. Both groups represented middle-class backgrounds. Of the 100 subjects participating in the first study, 52.2% were female and 47.8% were male; 76.7% white and 23.3% non-white; 42.4% single, 47.7% married, and 10.1% separated or divorced. The average length of current marriage = 7.4 years (Bray et al., 1984). In the second study of the 400 subjects participating, 50.4% were female and 49.6% were male; 87.8% white and 12.2% non-white; 30.9% single, 59.9% married, 7% separated or divorced, and 1% widowed; and the average length of current marriage = 15.5 years (Bray et al., 1984).

Reliability. Reliability coefficients were reported for the two Bray et al. (1984) studies. In the first study, using 90 subjects, test-retest reliability coefficients were obtained following a two week interval and ranged from .55 to .95 with a mean test-retest reliability coefficient of .74 (Bray et al., 1984). In the second study, and as part of a factor analysis of the instrument, reliability coefficients ranging from .74 to .96 (estimates of

Cronbach's alpha) were found for the eight scales ($n = 400$). While there were some changes made in the eight scales between the first and second studies, they basically remained very similar. Using data from the first study, the coefficients reflecting internal consistency outcomes on Time I and Time II were similar, yielding Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .82 to .92 (mean = .90) and from .80 to .95 (mean = .89) respectively.

Validity. Two groups of professionals (Group I - students enrolled in a "Transgenerational Family Therapy" course, and Group II - Mental Health professionals with training and personal therapy experience) assessed the content and face validity of the PAFS-Q in order to determine the extent to which the items were measures of relevant behaviors and concepts on the eight scales. Based on their evaluations, some items were re-worded, moved to different scales, or dropped. Concurrent validity was examined by using the Family Adaptability and Cohesion and Evaluation Scales-I (FACES-I) and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS). These two instruments are reported to measure relevant concepts in the nuclear family. Furthermore, relationships between the individual's reports of their nuclear family and family of origin were examined. Pearson correlation coefficients ($p > .05$) between subscales of FACES-I, DAS and PASF questionnaire were calculated and the results were low. Bray et al. (1984) suggested that the reason for these analyses producing $r = .27$, ($p > .05$) is that the scales measure different phenomena. This low

relationship justifies the development of the PASF questionnaire (Williamson, 1981). The research points out that relationships between nuclear family functioning and family of origin functioning are more complex and not as obvious as had previously been stated (Bray et al., 1984).

In the Bray et al. (1984) Study II, factor analysis was used to assess the construct validity of the scales. There was support for individuation and intimacy in the concept of personal authority in the family system in this study.

Family-of-Origin Scale

The Family-of-Origin Scale (FOS) was designed by Hovestadt, Anderson, Piercy and Fine (1983) to measure the degree of perceived health in the family of origin and is divided into two primary essential and interwoven concepts, intimacy and autonomy. There are a total of 10 constructs utilized to describe the two concepts (Lewis et al., 1976). Healthy families are perceived to develop autonomy by emphasizing clarity of expression, personal responsibility, respect for other family members and openness to others in the family, and by dealing openly with separation and loss (Hovestadt et al., 1985). Those developing intimacy encourage the expression of a wide range of feelings, creating a warm atmosphere in the home, dealing with conflicts without undue stress, promoting sensitivity in family members, and trusting in the goodness of human nature (Hovestadt et al., 1985).

Initially, there were 89 items generated by students and faculty in a university family therapy program (Hovestadt et al, 1985). Of these items, 29 were screened out initially and the 60 questions that were left were rated by six nationally recognized authorities in family therapy. The instrument is now composed of 40 items. Each of the items are written in declarative format and are rated on a five point Likert-type scale. An item receiving a score of 5 is interpreted as most healthy while one receiving a score of 1 is interpreted as least healthy. It is possible to score as high as 200 points and as low as 40 points.

Norms. Normative data were collected from 278 undergraduate and graduate students at East Texas State University in 1980 (Hovestadt et al, 1985). There were 39 Black and 239 White participants. There was no significant difference between the mean score for Blacks (147.0) and for Whites (144.1).

Reliability. Over a two week interval, a test-retest reliability coefficient of $r = .97$ ($p < .001$) was obtained on 41 graduate psychology students completing the FOS (Hovestadt et al., 1985). The test-retest coefficient for the 20 autonomy items ranged from .39 to .88 with a mean of .77 and the coefficient for intimacy ranged from .46 to .87 with a mean of .73 (Hovestadt et al., 1985). Cronbach's alpha (1951) of .75 was reported on an independent study of 116 undergraduates and a Standardized Item alpha of .97 was obtained (Wilcoxon & Hovestadt, 1983).

Validity. A group of six nationally recognized

professionals in marital and family therapy assisted in determining the content validity of FOS by rating each item. Criterion-related validity tests showed significant differences ($r = 14.056$ $p < .05$) between the FOS scores of subject groups representing high-medium and high-low scores on the Semantic Differential Scale (Osgood, Suci & Tannenbaum, 1957). Additionally, Hovestadt et al., 1983 reported a significant difference ($r = 3.603$ $p < .05$) between the FOS scores of subjects representing high and low levels of perceived rationality, as measured by their scores on the Rational Behavior Inventory (Shorkey & Whiteman, 1977). A construct validity measure yielded a $r = .86$ correlation coefficient between the DAS and the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale (Locke & Wallace, 1976). In addition, a criterion-related validity comparison between married and unmarried subjects was significant at the .001 level of statistical significance (Spanier, 1976).

Procedures

Data were collected during the summer of 1986. The examiner attended a meeting at each of the three churches. There were 115 individuals that volunteered to participate in this study. The participants were requested to complete both the Family-of-Origin Scale and the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire. An explanation and directions for the self-administration of the instruments were written and placed at the beginning of each test

booklet. The participants were informed that the researcher was gathering data concerning perceptions of their families. Confidentiality was assured. The materials were distributed to the volunteers during meetings at their respective churches. A list of the participants was organized and each of the packets of materials was assigned a number corresponding to each individual's name. The subjects were requested to return the materials to the researcher at each of the churches within a one-week period of time. After collecting the materials at the designated meeting at each of the churches, the researcher was able to detect which packets were incomplete/missing. A follow-up telephone call was placed to those participants who did not return the materials at the appropriately scheduled meeting. A plan was discussed for retrieval of the packet during the telephone conversation. Out of the 115 packets that were disseminated, 90 were returned. This illustrates a 78% response rate of the volunteers.

After gathering the above materials from each of the three churches, the scores for the PAFS-Q and FOS were recorded. The data were then prepared for analysis.

Research Design

This study was correlational in nature and used stepwise multiple regression analysis with the one dependent variable (Spousal Fusion/Individuation), and three independent variables (Intimacy and Autonomy in the family

of origin and Age) to test the major hypotheses. The correlational design permits tests of relationships between a wide variety of variables. The regression procedure analyzes variables in their continuous form and no accuracy of measurement is lost due to a categorization procedure. One major limitation of this design, however, is the interpreter's inability to establish causal factors that contribute to variables found to be significantly related.

Analyses of the Data

Stepwise multiple regression using the SPSS-X Regression subprogram (SPSS-X User's Guide, 1983) was used to analyze the data in which the independent variables were age and intimacy and autonomy in the family of origin, and the dependent variable was spousal fusion. Therefore, the order of entry of variables depends on statistical criteria. At each step the variable that adds most to the prediction equation, in terms of increasing R , is entered. Ultimately the process concludes when there no longer is any useful information to be found from further addition of variables. The resulting correlation were examined. The assumptions that underly multiple regression, including multicollinearity, singularity, normality, linearity and homoscedasticity of residuals were examined. In testing the major hypothesis, the significance criterion for R was set at $\alpha = .05$.

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients were

calculated to look at the two scales from the PAFS-Q (Spousal Fusion/Individuation and Intergenerational Intimacy) and the FOS (Intimacy and Autonomy), in order to determine if the scales are significantly correlated in a positive direction thereby suggesting that they measure the same concepts. The significance criterion was set at $\alpha = .05$ for the second general hypothesis.

Summary

Subjects for this study were 45 female and 45 male members from three churches in a midwestern college town. Procedures for the administration of the instruments and the collection of the data were discussed. The instruments utilized in the study were the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire and the Family-of-Origin Scale. The statistical procedure used to analyze the data was described. Details of the findings are presented in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Introduction

Presented in this chapter are the findings of the present investigation. This study was designed to identify age, levels of intimacy and autonomy in the family of origin as predictors of spousal fusion in married individuals. A sample of 90 subjects provided the data necessary to test the two major hypotheses and the three secondary hypotheses. Multiple regression analysis (stepwise) was used to assess the relationship between one dependent variable (spousal fusion) and three independent variables (age, and levels of intimacy and autonomy in the family of origin). The means and standard deviations of the variables are listed in Table 4. Pearson product-moment correlations (Pearson r) were calculated to measure the relationship between two scales from the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire (Intergenerational Intimacy and Spousal Fusion) and two scales from the Family-of-Origin Scale (Intimacy and Autonomy).

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations of Variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviations
Spousal Fusion	67.31	9.61
Age	38.73	13.46
Autonomy (FOS)	68.03	13.11
Intimacy (FOS)	71.06	13.50

N = 90

First General Hypothesis

The first research hypothesis for this study was as follows:

Age, levels of intimacy, and autonomy in the family of origin are significant predictors of spousal fusion in married individuals.

In the first general hypothesis, a stepwise multiple regression was used to determine which of the variables (age, levels of autonomy and intimacy in the family of origin) contributed to the prediction of spousal fusion. The assumptions (normality, linearity and homoscedasticity

of residuals) of multiple regression were evaluated through the use of the SPSS-X Regression subprogram (SPSS-X User's Guide, 1983). It indicated that no transformations of variables or deletions of outliers was necessary. Presented in Table 5 are the results of the stepwise regression analysis that indicates that of the three variables, age, levels of autonomy and intimacy in the family of origin, intimacy was the one that contributed significantly ($p < .05$) to the prediction of spousal fusion. Therefore, 12% of the variance in the measuring of spousal fusion can be attributed to variance in scores that reflect intimacy. This result supports the first major hypothesis to the extent that at least one variable was found to be a significant predictor of spousal fusion. Presented in Table 6 is the intercorrelational matrix for the variables in the investigation.

Table 5

Stepwise Regression Results for the
Prediction of Spousal Fusion

(N = 90)

Predictor	Beta	R	R2	R2 Change	df	F
Intimacy	.2477	.35	.12	.12	1,88	12.12*

* $p < .05$

The Secondary Hypotheses

It was hypothesized that levels of intimacy and autonomy in the family of origin and age would significantly correlate with spousal fusion. The following hypotheses were tested:

1. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant relationship between spousal fusion and age. Results of the stepwise regression analysis showed that there is no significance in the relationship between age and spousal fusion.

2. Secondly, it was hypothesized that there would be a significant relationship between spousal fusion and level of

Table 6

Correlation Matrix of Variables

(N = 90)

	SPFUS	AGE	AUTFOS	INTFOS
SPFUS	1.0000	-.045	.325	.348
AGE		1.000	.065	-.049
AUTFOS			1.000	.871
INTFOS				1.000

SPFUS - Spousal Fusion

AUTFOS - Autonomy from the Family-of-Origin Scale

INTFOS - Intimacy from the Family-of-Origin Scale

autonomy in the family of origin. The results of the regression analysis depict no significance in the relationship between the level of autonomy in the family of origin and spousal fusion.

3. The third and final part of the hypothesis stated that there would be a significant relationship between spousal fusion and level of intimacy in the family of origin. Level of intimacy in the family of origin was found to significant predictor of spousal fusion.

Second General Hypothesis

The second general hypothesis stated that the autonomy and intimacy scales from the Family-of-Origin Scale are significantly correlated with the spousal fusion and intergenerational intimacy scales from the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire. Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated between these scales. The means and standard deviations are listed for each of the scales in Table 7. Presented in Table 8 are the Pearson product-moment correlations for spousal fusion, intergenerational intimacy, autonomy and intimacy. All correlations were highly significant with the exception of intergenerational intimacy with spousal fusion. With 88 degrees of freedom at the .05 level of significance, a critical value of .175 was needed for significance.

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations ofFour Scales from Instruments

(N = 90)

Scale Deviation	Mean	Standard
Spousal Fusion (PAFS-Q)	67.31	9.61
Intergenerational Intimacy (PAFS-Q)	95.56	15.47
Autonomy (FOS)	68.03	13.11
Intimacy (FOS)	71.06	13.50

Table 8

Correlation Matrix Between ScalesFrom Instruments

	SPFUS	II	AUT	INT
SPFUS	1.0000	.0781	.3249*	.3479*
II		1.0000	.4659*	.5416*
AUT			1.0000	.8713*
INT				1.0000

 SPFUS - Spousal Fusion

II - Intergenerational Intimacy

AUT - Autonomy

INT - Intimacy

 * $p < .05$

Summary

Stepwise multiple regression was utilized to analyze the data to determine whether age or levels of autonomy and intimacy within the family of origin were predictors of spousal fusion among married individuals. The results provided statistical evidence ($p < .05$) that intimacy is a significant predictor of spousal fusion and is responsible for 12% of the variance supporting the first general hypothesis of this investigation.

Pearson product-moment correlations were computed between spousal fusion and intergenerational intimacy from the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire and autonomy and intimacy from the Family-of-Origin Scale. Statistical significance at the .05 level was found between all of the correlations with the exception of the correlation between spousal fusion and intergenerational intimacy ($r = .07$; $p > .05$). These significant correlations support the second general hypothesis.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between spousal fusion and age and levels of autonomy and intimacy within the family of origin. Correlational analyses between two scales from the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire (Spousal Fusion and Intergenerational Intimacy) and two scales from the Family-of-Origin Scale (Autonomy and Intimacy) were performed.

There were 90 married individuals that volunteered to participate in this investigation, of which 45 were female and 45 were male. In the sample, 40 of the subjects were from a Catholic Church, 30 from a Methodist Church and 20 were from a Unitarian Church. Each of the volunteers completed two instruments and a demographic questionnaire.

The data that were analyzed for this study were derived from the scores from two scales from the Personal Authority

in the Family System Questionnaire (PAFS-Q), and two scales from the Family-of-Origin Scale (FOS). In addition, data from a demographic questionnaire were utilized in the analyses.

It was hypothesized in this study that there would be significant relationships between spousal fusion, and age and levels of autonomy and intimacy in the family of origin. Stepwise multiple regression analysis of the data was used to determine whether significant relationships existed among the variables. A significant relationship was found between spousal fusion and level of intimacy within the family of origin. Age and level of autonomy within the family of origin were not found to be related significantly to spousal fusion. Therefore, the hypothesis as a whole was not supported. However, intimacy was found to be significantly related to spousal fusion. Thus, one aspect of the first general hypothesis was supported, suggesting that the level of intimacy within the family of origin can aid in the prediction of the level of spousal fusion among married individuals.

It was further hypothesized in a second general hypothesis that the spousal fusion and intergenerational intimacy scales from the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire and autonomy and intimacy scales from the Family-of-Origin Scale would be significantly correlated. Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated between the four scales. All correlations were

highly significant with the exception of spousal fusion with intergenerational intimacy. This outcome supports the second general hypothesis of this study.

Discussion

Review of the demographic data that was provided by the subjects revealed several different insights. There appears to be no difference in the data from the three churches that are represented in the sample. The sample group consists of very highly educated individuals, with 51% of the population having a bachelors, masters or doctoral level degree and an additional 25% with some college experience, totalling 76% of the population. This might be attributed to the University located in the town where the data were collected. Furthermore, a total of 78% of the volunteers completed the instruments for this study. This too may be due to an educational setting that may involve these subjects directly or indirectly. Approximately 29% of the participants were involved in some capacity in education at either the student or teaching level. Lastly, 76% of the subjects were presently married for the first time. This is a high percentage and may be accounted for by the higher level of education among the individuals. Today's divorce rate is approximately 50%, which is much higher than what was represented in this sample, since only 23% had been married more than once.

Although the results of this study do not fully support the first general hypothesis, significance was found between intimacy within the family of origin and spousal fusion as stated in the first secondary hypothesis. Therefore, those individuals from family of origins that were considered intimate are less likely to develop relationships with spouses that are fused. It is important to emphasize that higher scores on the Spousal Fusion/Individuation scale indicates greater individuation. Lewis (1979) states that patterns of interaction are developed and they tend to persist throughout the life cycle in the family. Therefore, those patterns that have been modeled for children will most likely continue for them in future relationships. Fused families have a strong sense of "we-ness" with unclear boundaries (Minuchin, 1979), while intimate families have clear boundaries with a sense of "I-ness" along with an ingroup sense of "we" (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1980).

This study would support Lewis (1979), who says that adults should be aware of the importance in their role as a model for their children. Furthermore, children observe their parent's interactions with each other, family members and friends, and these exchanges influence the development of children and their interactions and relationships with others. What children see modeled for them will most likely be reproduced in their own lives, such as the perception of parent's level of intimacy (Waring, 1984) or fusion. In adulthood a reconstruction of earlier paradigms from the

family of origin appear in marital relationships. Yet, in order to achieve an intimate relationship with a spouse, one must differentiate from their family of origin (Glick & Kessler, 1974) or change the family pattern. Williamson (1981) states that intergenerational intimacy is the ability of a person to individuate and gain personal authority in their family of origin, whereas Hovestadt et al., 1985 describe intimacy as the ability to share warm feelings, decrease the amount of conflict and tension and promote empathy among the individuals in a family. The latter is supported by the first general hypothesis. Therefore, this study does support the previous literature pertaining to the perpetuation of family patterns. If a person at some level perceives that their family is fused, they will most likely reproduce that in their marital relationship.

This study did not support that autonomy within the family of origin would significantly predict spousal fusion. Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt is a second stage in Erikson's theory of development. Autonomy is engendered if parents guide their children's behaviors gradually and firmly (Erikson, 1964). Hall and Lindzey (1978) state that children should be encouraged to experience situations that require the autonomy of free choice, prompting freedom of self-expression and lovingness. In a fused family there is very little autonomy since a strong sense of "we'ness" exists. In optimally functioning families, members maintain their own identity and still have a sense of belongingness

to their family. Hovestadt et al. (1985) state that autonomy develops by emphasizing clear expression of feelings, claiming responsibility for one's own actions, maintaining respect for others, promoting openness with other family members and dealing openly with separation and loss. In this study, autonomy was not found to be a significant predictor of spousal fusion. This might be attributed to a couple of reasons. Thirty-nine percent of the respondents in this study live within 100 miles of their parents. More specifically, most of the subjects in this group lived between 25 to 50 miles from their parent's home. Living in closer proximity may maintain the ties from childhood and disallow a clear transition into the relationship with a spouse and children. It is also noted that theoretically, autonomy in the family of origin should be inversely related to spousal fusion. In a fused family there is a strong sense of "we-ness", which is unlike a person who has autonomy within the family system. The factor, autonomy, may not have significantly predicted spousal fusion in this study since it was so highly correlated with the other variables.

The third secondary hypothesis stated that age and spousal fusion would have a significant relationship. This was not supported in this investigation. This variable, like autonomy, may not be significant since it is highly correlated with the other two variables. Williamson (1981) refers to the fourth decade of life as a time that one can

terminate the hierarchical boundary between adult and older parents. Through the termination of this hierarchical relationship one is able to form a more intimate relationship with a spouse. If one does not individuate from their family, fusion may still exist. Erikson (1950) views life in a developmental format, with intimacy beginning to form between the ages of 20 and 24. Again, individuation must have occurred. The results of this investigation indicated that age was not found to be a significant predictor of spousal fusion. One might speculate that this occurred because the mean age was 38 and 50% of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 38. More specifically, 25% of the subjects fell into the age range from 18 to 30.

Conclusion

In summary, the first general hypothesis stated that there would be a significant relationship between spousal fusion and age and levels of autonomy and intimacy in the family of origin. Through the use of stepwise multiple regression, a significant relationship was found between spousal fusion and the level of intimacy in the family of origin, to partially support the hypothesis. This means that if one experiences individuation in their family of origin they will most likely achieve a higher score on the Spousal Fusion/Individuation scale. Age and level of

autonomy in the family of origin were not found to be significant predictors of spousal fusion.

The second general hypothesis suggested that Spousal Fusion/Individuation and Intergenerational Intimacy from the PAFS-Q and Autonomy and Intimacy from the FOS would be significantly correlated. All scales were significantly and positively correlated, with the exception of Spousal Fusion/Individuation and Intergenerational Intimacy. One explanation of this may be that the Spousal Fusion/Individuation scale measures what it says - spousal fusion and individuation. Neither of these are the same as intimacy, although individuation with the family of origin must occur before forming an intimate relationship with a spouse. In addition, Bray et al. (1984) did not find significance between these two scales in the correlations that they performed.

Recommendations

This has been an exploratory study. The following recommendations are based on the results of this study which examined whether age and levels of autonomy and intimacy in the family of origin predict spousal fusion.

1. This study is limited in the generalizability to those from a community of similar size located in a University setting. Further research that is designed to investigate the relationship between the variables in this

study should have a population that is much more varied. Differences in educational level and culture would be important to look at in the future.

2. The use of the results from this investigation could be helpful for counselors/therapists to assist them in their awareness of the influence of the family of origin. This study along with other literature and investigations support the importance of the influence of the family of origin over spousal relationships.

3. Those seeking careers in marriage and family therapy should become aware of the impact the family of origin has on daughters and sons. This type of material and the use of these and similar instruments could be covered in the classroom setting in preparation for clinical work.

4. Use of these instruments in the therapeutic setting may contribute to the treatment of clients. The results on the instruments are not conclusive, but may aid in the therapeutic milieu. The therapists may gain a better understanding of the dynamics of the clients in therapy.

5. Continued research measuring the similarities and differences between the Family-of-Origin Scale and the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire is suggested.

6. In closing, this study is exploratory in nature and requires replication and refinement to support the findings. An investigation conducted in the same setting, a different setting or with a larger population would help to better

establish these findings.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

PERMISSION



Texas Woman's University

1130 M.D. Anderson Boulevard, Houston, Texas 77030

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

Dear Colleague,

Thank you for your request of the **Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire**. Enclosed please find the materials that you requested.

You are hereby granted permission to reproduce the **PAFS-Q** and answer sheet for your proposed project. You may not alter the original scales or use items from a single scale. Be sure to reference the 1984 article or manual in any articles.

If you plan to use the **PAFS-Q** in your thesis or dissertation, do not put a copy of the instrument and how to score it in your final manuscript. Indicate that people should contact me for copies of the instrument.

We may contact you in the future to receive your feedback on the instrument. Since this is the first printing we would greatly appreciate any feedback you have on the instrument and manual.

We will keep your name on our mailing list for future updates. Thank you for your interest in our work. If you have any questions feel free to write or call me at (713) 792-7739.

Sincerely,

James H. Bray, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

JHB:jb

607 N. Duncan
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74075
May 23, 1986

Alan J. Hovestadt, Ed.D.
Chair, Department of Personnel
and Counseling Psychology
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, MI 49008

*Permission
Granted
got*

Dear Dr. Hovestadt,

This letter is in reference to our phone conversation on May 21, 1986.

Presently I am a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology Department at Oklahoma State University. At this time I am working on my dissertation.

I would like to ask your permission to duplicate and utilize the Family-of-Origin Scale for my dissertation. In the study I will be looking at patterns in the family of origin and their effects on spousal relationships, as well as the similarities in some of the scales (what they measure) between the Family-of-Origin Scale and the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire.

Thank you very much for your consideration and I appreciate your kind assistance. I enjoyed talking with you on the phone .

Cordially,

Pat

Patricia A. Levy, M.A.

APPENDIX B

COVER LETTER

July, 1986

Dear Volunteer,

The purpose of this study is to look at family and spousal relationships.

Enclosed you will find three questionnaires: The Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire (PAFS-Q), the Family-of-Origin Scale (FOS), and a demographic questionnaire. An answer sheet is provided for the PAFS-Q and the FOS. Please record your answers on the appropriate answer sheet. You may record your answers for the demographic questionnaire directly on the questionnaire. When you have completed the questionnaires please place all of the materials (questionnaires and answer forms) into the envelope.

Please complete these forms without conferring with your spouse or others. I am interested in your personal responses.

Let me assure you that these forms will remain confidential. No one besides myself will have access to these completed questionnaires.

Thank you very much for volunteering to participate in answering these questions. I appreciate your time and contribution to this study.

Cordially,

Patricia A. Levy, M.A.

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA QUESTIONNAIRE

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Gender 2. Age as of last birthday: _____ years

Female _____

Male _____

3. Level of education

a. High School Graduate _____

b. Some college _____

c. Bachelors Degree _____

d. Masters Degree _____

e. Doctoral Degree _____

f. Other _____

4. Major in last degree _____

5. Current Profession/work role _____

6. How many times have you been married? _____

(Indicate the length of each marriage.)

First marriage _____ years

Second marriage _____ years

Third marriage _____ years

Fourth marriage _____ years

Family of Origin

7. Who were the primary people that raised you?

(Mother, Father, Aunt or Grandmother, etc.)

8. Approximate age of parents/guardian upon your birth:

Mother _____ years old

Father _____ years old

Guardian _____ years old

9. Are (is) your parents/guardian alive?

Mother ___ yes ___ no

Father ___ yes ___ no

Guardian ___ yes ___ no

10. If your parent/s are not living, in what year did they die and how old were you?

Mother _____ (date) _____ (your age)

Father _____ (date) _____ (your age)

Guardian _____ (date) _____ (your age)

11. At what age did you move out of your parent's house?

_____ years old

12. How many sisters and brothers did you have and what are their ages?

Number of Sisters:	Age	Deceased

Number of Brothers:	Age	Deceased

13. Do your parents currently live in your home with you?

___ yes ___ no

14. If no, approximately how many miles separate you?

15. How many children do you have (daughters and sons)?

List each of their ages.

Daughters

Age

Sons

Age

16. How many people presently live in your household?

How are they related to you? (Example: 1-daughter,
2-sons, wife, mother-in-law, and housekeeper)

Person

Relationship

APPENDIX D

FAMILY-OF-ORIGIN

No. _____

ANSWER SHEET FOR THE

FAMILY-OF-ORIGIN SCALE

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|
| 1. | _____ | 11. | _____ | 21. | _____ | 31. | _____ |
| 2. | _____ | 12. | _____ | 22. | _____ | 32. | _____ |
| 3. | _____ | 13. | _____ | 23. | _____ | 33. | _____ |
| 4. | _____ | 14. | _____ | 24. | _____ | 34. | _____ |
| 5. | _____ | 15. | _____ | 25. | _____ | 35. | _____ |
| 6. | _____ | 16. | _____ | 26. | _____ | 36. | _____ |
| 7. | _____ | 17. | _____ | 27. | _____ | 37. | _____ |
| 8. | _____ | 18. | _____ | 28. | _____ | 38. | _____ |
| 9. | _____ | 19. | _____ | 29. | _____ | 39. | _____ |
| 10. | _____ | 20. | _____ | 30. | _____ | 40. | _____ |

Family-of-Origin Scale

Directions: The family of origin is the family with which you spent most or all of your childhood years. This scale is designed to help you recall how your family of origin functioned.

Each family is unique and has its own ways of doing things. Thus, there are no right or wrong choices in this scale. What is important is that you respond as honestly as you can.

In reading the following statements, apply them to your family of origin, as you remember it. Using the following scale, circle the appropriate number. Please respond to each statement.

Key:

- 5 (SA) = Strongly agree that it describes my family of origin.
- 4 (A) = Agree that it describes my family of origin.
- 3 (N) = Neutral.
- 2 (D) = Disagree that it describes my family of origin.
- 1 (SD) = Strongly disagree that it describes my family of origin.

	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. In my family, it was normal to show both positive and negative feelings.	5	4	3	2	1
2. The atmosphere in my family usually was unpleasant.	5	4	3	2	1
3. In my family, we encouraged one another to develop new friendships.	5	4	3	2	1
4. Differences of opinion in my family were discouraged.	5	4	3	2	1
5. People in my family often made excuses for their mistakes.	5	4	3	2	1
6. My parents encouraged family members to listen to one another.	5	4	3	2	1
7. Conflicts in my family never got resolved.	5	4	3	2	1
8. My family taught me that people were basically good.	5	4	3	2	1
9. I found it difficult to understand what other family members said and how they felt.	5	4	3	2	1
10. We talked about our sadness when a relative or family friend died.	5	4	3	2	1
11. My parents openly admitted it when they were wrong.	5	4	3	2	1
12. In my family, I expressed just about any feeling I had.	5	4	3	2	1
13. Resolving conflicts in my family was a very stressful experience.	5	4	3	2	1
14. My family was receptive to the different ways various family members viewed life.	5	4	3	2	1
15. My parents encouraged me to express my views openly.	5	4	3	2	1
16. I often had to guess at what other family members thought or how they felt.	5	4	3	2	1
17. My attitudes and my feelings frequently were ignored or criticized in my family.	5	4	3	2	1
18. My family members rarely expressed responsibility for their actions.	5	4	3	2	1
19. In my family, I felt free to express my own opinions.	5	4	3	2	1
20. We never talked about our grief when a relative or family friend died.	5	4	3	2	1

	<i>SA</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>SD</i>
21. Sometimes in my family, I did not have to say anything, but I felt understood.	5	4	3	2	1
22. The atmosphere in my family was cold and negative.	5	4	3	2	1
23. The members of my family were not very receptive to one another's views.	5	4	3	2	1
24. I found it easy to understand what other family members said and how they felt.	5	4	3	2	1
25. If a family friend moved away, we never discussed our feelings of sadness.	5	4	3	2	1
26. In my family, I learned to be suspicious of others.	5	4	3	2	1
27. In my family, I felt that I could talk things out and settle conflicts.	5	4	3	2	1
28. I found it difficult to express my own opinions in my family.	5	4	3	2	1
29. Mealtimes in my home usually were friendly and pleasant.	5	4	3	2	1
30. In my family, no one cared about the feelings of other family members.	5	4	3	2	1
31. We usually were able to work out conflicts in my family.	5	4	3	2	1
32. In my family, certain feelings were not allowed to be expressed.	5	4	3	2	1
33. My family believed that people usually took advantage of you.	5	4	3	2	1
34. I found it easy in my family to express what I thought and how I felt.	5	4	3	2	1
35. My family members usually were sensitive to one another's feelings.	5	4	3	2	1
36. When someone important to us moved away, our family discussed our feelings of loss.	5	4	3	2	1
37. My parents discouraged us from expressing views different from theirs.	5	4	3	2	1
38. In my family, people took responsibility for what they did.	5	4	3	2	1
39. My family had an unwritten rule: Don't express your feelings.	5	4	3	2	1
40. I remember my family as being warm and supportive.	5	4	3	2	1

VITA

Patricia Anne Levy

Candidate for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: AUTONOMY AND INTIMACY IN THE FAMILY OF ORIGIN AND
AGE AS RELATED TO SPOUSAL FUSION IN MARRIED
INDIVIDUALS

Major Field: Applied Behavioral Studies

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Louisville, Kentucky,
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Assistant, Oklahoma State University, August 1983
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