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Family-of-Origin Distress

and Intimacy in Later-Life Couples

by

Paul James Birch

A thesis presented to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

Department of Marriage and Family Therapy

Brigham Young University

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Paul James Birch

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Paul James Birch in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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ABSTRACT

FAMILY-OF-ORIGIN DISTRESS AND INTIMACY IN LATER LIFE COUPLES

Paul James Birch

Marriage & Family Therapy Program

Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy

Married couples aged 55-98 were surveyed regarding their perceptions of family-of-origin distress, their affective communication and problem solving communication skills, and their emotional intimacy. Two 2-way ANOVAs were performed with husbands' (model 1) and wives' (model 2) emotional intimacy scores as dependent measures and family-of-origin distress scores as the independent measures. Then both models were re-analyzed with affective communication and problem solving communication entered as co-variates. Results suggested that for both husbands and wives, emotional intimacy was affected by family-of-origin distress. Additionally, intimacy was affected by the distress in their spouses' family-of-origin in both models. Post-hoc analyses suggested that as long as at least one member of the couple reports low family-of-origin distress, intimacy does not suffer for either spouse. Taking communication variables into account rendered the effects of family-of-origin distress non-significant in both models. Results are discussed in terms of their implications for psychoanalytic, systemic, and developmental theory.

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FAMILY-OF-ORIGIN AND INTIMACY IN LATER LIFE COUPLES

Family-of-Origin Distress and Intimacy in Later Life Couples

The purpose of this study was to examine whether or not the effects of family-of-origin on adult marriages persists into later life. Specifically, the effects of perceived family-of-origin distress on emotional intimacy when current affective and problem solving communication were controlled was investigated in later life couples.

Since the beginning of the history of psychotherapy, the influence of family-of-origin factors on children's lives and relationships has been a topic of extensive consideration. Beginning with Freud and continuing on to other theorists such as Adler, Jung, and Sullivan, psychotherapy theorists have tried to understand and explain these influences and how they are relevant to the practice of therapy. Family therapy pioneers such as Ackerman, Alger, Bowen, Framo, Wynne, Lidz, Zwerling, Boszormenyi-Nagy, Whitaker, Jackson, and Minuchin were all trained in the psychoanalytic tradition (Nichols & Schwartz, 1995) and brought family-of-origin issues to consideration in the context of marital and family treatment.

Examining the contributions of these theorists, it is clear that they were all influenced, to one degree or another, by the fundamental idea that relationships with members of one's family-of-origin influence later adult relational functioning (Nichols & Schwartz, 1995). Based on this premise, the theorists described above, along with several others (e.g. J. Framo,1992; D. Scharff, J. Scharff, 1991; Williamson, 1982) have created approaches to marital therapy

which reflect the belief that family-of-origin variables affect the adult intimate functioning of offspring. The contributions of these theorists are even more significant when considered in the context of the family therapy movement (especially the theoretical framework of systems theory) in which they developed. Developmental theories also have added a perspective to the issue of how family-of-origin variables affect marriages of adult offspring. The most basic tenets of these theories will be explained.

Psychoanalytic Theory. The most basic tenet of psychoanalytic theory is that the relationship between a child and it's parents, especially early in life, is fundamental to the development of a healthy psyche and forms the template which drives the relationship functioning of that individual throughout his or her life. A review of such literature is beyond the scope of this paper. However, suffice it to say that expressions of this basic tenet are found in nearly all of the major psychoanalytic theories (e.g. Bowen, Boszormenyi-Nagy, Framo, Freud, Jackson, Scharff, Whitaker).

System Theory. Systems theory begins with the basic belief that "the whole is greater than the sum of the parts" (Nichols & Schwartz, 1995, citing ideas of Bertalanffy, author of General Systems Theory). This means that we cannot understand the behavior of an individual irrespective of the context in which that individual operates. Examining how one's family-of-origin experience operates on their relational functioning, for example, does not produce as coherent a picture as also examining the effects of that individual's family-of-origin

experience on their spouse, their spouse's family-of-origin experience on them, as well as the effect of the individual's perceptions of their family-of-origin experience on the perceptions of their spouse, and so on. In other words, understanding the extent to which individuals' reports of relational functioning is a function of all possible bi-directional effects yields a more complete picture than simply examining a few of the possible uni-directional ones.

Developmental Theory. Developmental theory suggests that the individual is a dynamic, changing entity that progresses and evolves over time in response to biological, intellectual, and social growth. Developmental theories also make assertions similar to psychoanalytic theory regarding the impact of early family life on later relational functioning. For example, attachment theory (Bowlby, 1977), which shares some notions of developmental theory, makes "two bold hypotheses" (Bartholomew, 1993, p. 30): First, that attachment behavior characterizes human beings throughout life, and second, that "patterns established in childhood parent-child relationships tend to structure the quality of later adult-child relationships" (p. 30). According to Bowlby, the basic premise of attachment theory is that internal representations of attachment formed during childhood and adolescence "tend to persist relatively unchanged into and throughout adult life" (Bowlby, 1977, p. 209).

Developmental theory would also suggest that due to changes and progress over the life-cycle, that the types of psychological issues that impact relational functioning would change. For example, a father with a newborn son

will tend to be influenced by aspects of his family-of-origin experience that are salient to that stage in his son's life whereas that same father may be influenced by different family-of-origin issues when his son is about to be married.

Purpose

The theoretical model to be tested in this study is based on an integration of the concepts of all three of these theories. The focus of this study is to examine the hypothesis that psychoanalytic variables such as the conflict between a child and it's parents can affect the relational functioning of that child. Specifically, that this effect persists across the development of the child into later life will be examined, with a special emphasis on understanding the possible systemic effects by casting the independent variables in the study in terms of couple combinations, rather than leaving analysis at the level of the individual.

The model illustrates the theory that family-of-origin variables will have both direct and indirect effects on offspring's intimacy. The indirect effects are exerted as family-of-origin experiences lead to the development of attributes and skills that in turn have an effect on the ability to express intimacy. Examples of these attributes are problem-solving skills, communication skills, attachment, and the expression of affection. Direct effects probably come in the form of unresolved emotional issues in the family-of-origin which lead to transference, traumatic memories, and other processes.

Each spouse is also potentially affected by the family-of-origin background of their spouse in similarly direct and indirect manners. In order to

gain a clear picture of what is currently known about these variables and their relationship to one another, literature pertaining to each topic is now reviewed and hypotheses are proposed based on this literature and the theories explained above.

Review of Literature

The primary topic of interest for this review is the effects of family-of-origin perceptions on current relational functioning. Accordingly, literature pertaining to these topics are reviewed first. Having established that family-of-origin factors influence relational functioning, studies pertaining to intimacy are reviewed.

The Influence of Family-of-Origin Factors on Marriage

As stated above, the idea that family-of-origin factors influence later relationship functioning is one well-grounded in theory but without a great deal of empirical confirmation. The following review is intended to offer the most recent evidence regarding the impact of family-of-origin issues on later functioning.

Early research in the prediction of marital quality used family-of-origin as factors in their designs (e.g. Adams, 1946; Burgess & Wallin, 1953; Kelly & Conley, 1987; Terman & Oden, 1947; Vaillant, 1978). Based on their own and previous research, Burgess and Wallin (1953) concluded that "A young person has a better than average chance of marital success if he has been reared in a home of education and culture where the parents are happily married, where they have close affectionate relations with their children, and where discipline is kindly but firm and physical punishment rare" (1953, p. 513). However, as Holman & Birch

(1998) point out, these studies yielded imprecise information about the operation of family-of-origin variables because they did not distinguish the effects of different types of variables. Rather, they simply included some "family-of-origin" variable, which usually was a mixture of both structural and process variables. This made it difficult to determine exactly what was responsible for any effects they found. These studies generally found that these variables did in fact have an effect on the later marriages of children but that the effect was inconsistent and often weak (Holman & Birch, 1998).

In their review of such studies, Wamboldt and Reiss (1989) said the following: "Viewed as a whole this research does support the hypothesis that residues from one's family-of-origin experience persist into later life and influence later development. Unfortunately, what actually persists and precisely how later marital development is influenced remain unknown." (p 319). Based on this, it is important to try and separate out the process and structural variables to understand the relative contributions of these different types of variables.

Holman & Birch (1998), in their review of literature pertaining to this topic, divide family-of-origin factors into four categories: 1) Family Structure, i.e. divorced vs. non-divorced, 2) Family Environment, 3) Parent's Marital Quality, and 4) Parent-Child Relationship. The same categories will be used to organize this review.

Family Structure. Overall, studies dealing with the effects of family structure on adult offsprings' marriages have yielded mixed results. For example,

Webster, Orbuch, & House (1995) found no significant differences in marital happiness as a function of whether or not spouses' parents were divorced or not. Wamboldt & Reiss (1989) also failed to substantiate a significant relationship between children's marital adjustment and their parents' divorce. However, whereas these studies did not find a relationship, Amato & Keith (1991), in a meta-analysis of these types of studies, found that there was a significant negative relationship between parental divorce and children's marital quality.

On the contrary, whereas there may be no general relationship between children's marital quality and their parents' divorce, some studies have found some interesting patterns. For example, in the study above (Webster, Orbuch, & House, 1995), further analysis revealed that when those who came from homes where parents had "very happy" marriages were eliminated from the analysis, that parental divorce was related to subjects' reports of negative patterns of interaction in their marriages. Additionally, those who came from divorced families were also more likely to report that their marriages were "in trouble". Silvestri (1992) found that men from divorced families endorsed a higher frequency of dysfunctional beliefs regarding intimacy and closeness. They concluded that "the transmission process [may] occur through injunctions against closeness and distancing interpersonal behavior" (p. 79). Other studies examining the relationship between parental and offspring divorce fail to account for gender differences, thus the findings of Silvestri's study, which specifically examined men, suggests that gender differences may account for the failure of

studies to find significant relationships between parental divorce and children's marital quality.

In conclusion, the evidence seems to suggest that a negative relationship may exist between these two variables but that more specific designs are needed to partition out variance associated with gender and other factors, such as perhaps length of marriage, quality of marriage, and others. None of the studies in this review did so.

Whereas the literature just reviewed yields some mixed results, there is strong support for the notion that parental divorce is likely to lead to children's divorce. Several studies support this idea (Amato, 1996; Amato & Keith, 1991; Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Guentherman & Hampton, 1992; McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988; Mueller & Pope, 1977; Pope & Mueller, 1976). Additionally, Jones (1990) found that females from divorced families show less differentiation and have higher chronic anxiety than females from non-divorced families. Finally, White (1990), in a review of such studies, indicates that no study in the literature has yielded any findings except a positive relationship between parental divorce and children's divorce.

Taken together, it seems that family structure is one way in which "family of origin" may affect adult children's marriage. Knowing that parental divorce affects children's divorce indicates that some unhealthy processes may occur in families that affect later relational functioning. To better understand what this process might be, pertinent literature will now be reviewed.

The effects of family environment on children's marital quality. Family environment is defined as the "events, processes, people, interactions, and perceptions that were part of the family in which [the individual] grew up" (Holman & Birch, 1998, p. 4). A few studies have shown that the general environment in children's families has an effect on their marital quality. For example, Harvey, Curry, & Bray (1991) showed that the quality of the relationships among nuclear family members was related to measures of subjects' psychological stress, health distress, and life stress. In two studies, Wilcoxson & Hovestadt (1985, 1983) found that similarity in family-of-origin environment (i.e. number of children, age of parents, family income, and general family medical health) among spouses predicted higher marital adjustment. They found that these relationships only held up for couples married for brief duration but not long-term duration. Kaslow, Rehm, Pollack, & Siegel (1990) found that children who came from families with more psychopathology tended to exhibit more psychpathology, which is in turn likely to lead to reduced marital adjustment (Basco, Prager, Pita, & Tamir, 1992; Ulrich, Dani, Russell, & O'Hara, 1988). Finally, Couillard (1990) found that both members of couples with high marital adjustment came from healthy families of origin and the poorly adjusted couples came from families-of-origin with low emotional health scores. Furthermore, wive's perceptions of their marital adjustment was most dependent on their own family-of-origin's emotional health, but husbands' marital adjustment was usually

influenced by wive's family-of-origin emotional health as well as their own family-of-origin's emotional health.

A number of other family environmental factors have been found to be related to marital quality as well. These factors include social class (Whyte, 1990), general home environment (including parental alcohol use, stressor events), childhood happiness, (Holman, Larson, & Harmer, 1994), alcohol abuse (Bennett, Wolin, & McAvity, 1988; Brennan, Shaver, & Tobey, 1991) and family conflict (Whyte, 1990).

Taken together, it seems that measures of general family environment also seem to be related to marital quality of offspring. Unanswered, however, are the questions of the mechanisms through which these factors exert their effects as well as whether these effects persist into later stages of life.

Parents' marital quality. Early research has supported the general hypothesis that parents' marital quality will be related to children's marital quality (Burgess and Wallin, 1953; Henry & Woodward, 1974; Terman and Oden, 1947). Recently, Rhoades (1994) found that parents' marital quality was only weakly related to their adult children's marital quality and was not statistically significant. Other studies have also showed a relationship between various measures of parents' marital quality and children's marital quality. For example, Harvey, Curry, & Bray (1991) found that the degree of individuation and intimacy reported in parents' marriages influenced the expression of the same in children's marriages. Overall, Henry, & Woodward (1974) found that a history of marital

discord in the family-of-origin was predictive of current marital complaints. Kaslow, Rehm, Pollack, & Siegel (1990) showed that children being seen in a clinic for behavior problems reported more negative opinions of their families and that clinic children's parents also reported lower marital satisfaction than non-clinic families.

Finally, VanLear (1992) showed that parents' marital quality influences children in their conflict styles in their own marriages. Specifically, he found that husbands tended to report rebellion against their fathers' conflict styles and to choose wives with styles different from their mothers' style. Wives tended to marry men similar to their fathers with respect to traditionalism. These results were consistent in marriages where spouses report that their parents' marriages were perceived as dissatisfying but when spouses perceived their parents' marriage as satisfying, they were more likely to replicate important aspects of the conflict styles of their parents.

These results seem to suggest that the marital quality of parents influences marital quality of children. This seems to be based on the observance of overt conflict, individuation and intimacy, communication styles, and the choice of conflict styles. Others (e.g. Kerr & Bowen, 1982; Doxey, 1994; Napier & Whittaker, 1976) suggest that the mechanism in operation here is mate selection; i.e. these factors affect individuals' choice of a spouse and that choice then influences their marital adjustment. For example, a person low in individuation is predicted by this model to choose a partner low in individuation. The spouses

then have lower marital adjustment due to their parallel inability to separate from the family-of-origin, to resolve conflict rationally, and the resultant conflict this leads to. Other mechanisms are probably at work here but more research is needed to uncover them.

Parent-child relationships. Of all of the four sections reviewed here, parent-child relationships probably make the most sense theoretically as possibly affecting adult children's marital quality. This is because most of the research (as will be shown below) seems to point towards interpersonal efficacy as possibly the main mediator between family-of-origin experiences and current intimate functioning. It is mainly from parents that children learn how to deal with other people. Early childhood experiences probably shape both children and parents. The child, as it moves from year to year in it's life, then is influenced by and reacts to others around it as a function of these experiences, in turn creating a new set of experiences. By the time children are married, much of the difficulty they experience in marriage probably ends up being a function of interpersonal efficacy (developed mainly in the family of origin) which is affected both by a lack of interpersonal skills, and the inability to attain those skills due to the emotional pain associated with facing their causes.

In terms of research in this area, findings have generally found support for the hypothesis that perceptions of the quality of parent-child relationships are related to the quality of marriage (Holman, et al., 1994; Kelly & Conley, 1987, Larson & Holman, 1994). From an attachment perspective, several researchers

have found support for the hypothesis that attachment styles in early infancy would also be identifiable in young adulthood (Feeney & Noller, 1990; Fischer & Ayoub, 1996; Noam, 1996; Shaver & Clark, 1996). These studies also found support for the notion that negative attachment styles (avoidant, anxious, anxious-ambivalent) negatively affected marital quality. Additionally, other researchers have found a consistent relationship between parent-child relationship quality and marital quality (Doxey, 1994; Franz, McClelland, & Weinberger, 1991; Napier & Whitaker, 1976).

Summary of family-of-origin factors. Holman & Birch (1998) conducted a study in which all of the factors just reviewed were taken into account using structural equation modeling to predict marital quality in young married couples. Theory would suggest that the strength of the contribution of different factors to marital quality should be based on how proximal or distal they occur with respect to the child's life. Holman and Birch's results supported this. They found that the quality of the parent-child relationship had the strongest relationship with later marital quality, such that the higher the quality of the parent-child relationship in childhood, the higher the quality of the adult child's marital quality several (5 to 10) years into marriage. Also important was the quality of the parents' marriage. The higher the quality of the parents' marriage, the higher the parent-child relationship quality. Family-of-origin factors in which the child did not participate directly (i.e. parental employment, government) did, as predicted from the human ecology (i.e. Bronfenbrenner, 1979) perspective, make a significant contribution,

but not as strong as the parent-child relationship. While being reared in an intact versus any other family structure was not related to the quality of the parent-child relationship, it was related to the quality of the parents' marriage, such that parents in intact marriages had a better relationships with one another than in other family structural arrangements. In addition, Holman & Birch's (1998) results suggested that socio-demographic factors such as family income, employment, etc. may also make an important contribution and that overall, family-of-origin factors had considerably more influence on wives' marital quality than family-of-origin factors had on husbands' marital quality. The findings of Holman & Birch's study are consistent with the literature reviewed above and serve as a good summary of them as well.

Two important factors are notably absent from the literature regarding family-of-origin effects on marriage. First, the study of these processes in later life couples is important to establish the longevity of these effects. Although the literature suggests that younger and middle aged married couples might benefit from attention to these issues, clinical interventions and educational efforts aimed at addressing family-of-origin issues may or may not be relevant to later life couples. Second, virtually all of the studies reviewed examined the impact of family-of-origin variables from an individual perspective. Even those studies that used marital variables as dependent measures (e.g. marital satisfaction) still examined the effects of groups of individuals' family-of-origin variables on their own or their spouses functioning. Theoretically and statistically, these studies

yield important information to begin the process of articulating the operation of family-of-origin variables. They do so by confirming the theory that one's own family-of-origin variables will affect their own relational functioning. They then demonstrate that and individual's family-of-origin variables can also have an effect on their spouse. However, a vital piece is missing; examining the impact of different combinations of family-of-origin backgrounds. Systemic theory would propose that it is the combined effect of all of the variables in all possible directions (i.e. bi-directional, circular causality) that is most useful for understanding the operation of families. By studying different types of couples (i.e. as a function of different combinations of family-of-origin variables), this idea begins to receive empirical attention that heretofore is lacking in the literature.

Factors Influencing Intimacy

Examining the literature regarding family-of-origin issues, a number of relationship variables have been shown to be affected by family-of-origin variables. For example, marital satisfaction (Canfield, Hovstadt, & Fenell, 1992; Couillard, 1990), divorce potential (Amato & Keith, 1991), and differentiation (Griffin & Apostal, 1993) have all been shown to be affected by family-of-origin variables.

This study will use intimacy as the relational functioning variable of interest. Theoretically, intimacy makes sense as an important variable in the study of family-of-origin dynamics; unresolved painful childhood emotional issues

seem likely to affect the expression of love, affection, closeness, and togetherness that characterize intimacy. Empirically, several studies help support the importance of intimacy. For example, early studies found that verbal, affective, and physical intimacy were all highly predictive of marital satisfaction and divorce potential in couples receiving marital counseling (Tolstedt & Stokes, 1983). Additionally, McAdams & Vaillant (1982) found that a high motivation for intimacy at age 30 was associated with higher levels of psychosocial adjustment 17 years later, as indicated by subjects scores on such measures as marital enjoyment and rates of drug and alcohol abuse. Finally, Harper & Elliot (1988) showed that the difference between the "actual" and "desired" intimacy in a relationships, was more predictive of marital adjustment than the actual level of intimacy. This finding is important in showing that intimacy is a powerful variable affecting relationship functioning; it can cause problems either due to it's deficiency or excess. It also illustrates the possibility that of all the various dimensions of marital adjustment, intimacy might be one of the more powerful contributors to variance in marital adjustment.

Given that intimacy appears to be an important variable, studies illustrating what variables affect intimacy are now reviewed. Those studies investigating the relationship between various factors and intimacy are reviewed first. Then, studies in which effects on intimacy may be inferred are examined.

Several personality variables, or factors, associated with long-term personality structures that likely existed before marriage, have been found to

affect the expression of intimacy. Blavier & Glenn (1995) found that the intensity of shame experienced by individuals was negatively correlated with perceptions of intimacy in their relationships with others, suggesting that shame, which probably begins to form in individuals' earliest intimate relationships (Harper & Hoopes, 1990), can also hinder later relational functioning. Others (e.g. Kahn, Zimmerman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Getzels; 1985) have shown that the formation of a healthy ego identity was important for the development of intimacy, suggesting that the ability to be separate from partners is a precursor to the ability to connect with them (i.e. intimacy). Other personality variables, such as neuroticism and self-esteem, also play a role in the development of quality intimate relationships (Luteijn, 1994).

A few studies have shown the direct impact of family-of-origin variables on intimacy. Silvestri (1992) found that men from divorced families endorsed a higher frequency of dysfunctional beliefs regarding intimacy and closeness. They concluded that "the transmission process [may] occur through injunctions against closeness and distancing interpersonal behavior" (p. 79). Harvey, Curry, & Bray (1991) found that the degree of individuation and intimacy reported in parents' marriages influenced the expression of the same in children's marriages.

Several studies have demonstrated that communication variables may have an impact on intimacy. Such factors as verbal compliance between partners (Jordan & Roloff; 1990), increased eye contact (Wada; 1990), emotional arousal (as displayed non-verbally; Patterson, Jordan, Hogan, & Frerker; 1981), and

conflict resolution strategies (Prager, 1991) have all been shown to be related to intimacy.

Regarding gender differences, research suggests that women generally report a greater desire for connectedness and intimacy (Lang-Takac & Osterweil, 1992), and that women's own perceptions of the level of intimacy in the relationship had more of an effect on their satisfaction than the attitudes of their husbands (Merves, Amidon, & Bernt, 1991).

Since intimacy is one component of marital quality and has been found to be significantly related to relationship satisfaction (Harper & Elliot, 1988; Merves, Amidon, & Bernt, 1991), it may be inferred, with some caution, that if a variable affects marital quality, it may have an effect on intimacy as well. Several studies have been conducted which examine the factors which influence marital quality. These studies will be briefly reviewed to further illuminate the factors that may influence intimacy.

Studies have shown that emotional responsiveness, or the consistency between expressed affection of spouses (Gottman, 1982), communication skills (Boyd & Roach, 1977), and direct, conventional communication styles (Ciselak, 1986) are all related to marital quality. The size of social networks (Hansen, Fallon, & Novotny, 1991) has also been shown to be related to marital quality.

Several other communication variables have been shown to be related to marital quality. Boland & Follingstad (1987) reviewed studies investigating these factors and concluded that the evidence is fairly consistent and strong that

communication variables (both process and content) are related to marital satisfaction. Other studies conducted since that time have bolstered this general finding. Factors such as the quality of the marital communication generally (Aube & Linden, 1991; Markman, Silvern, Clements, & Kraft, 1993; Pollock, Die, Marriott, 1990), egalitarianism (Pollock, Die, Marriott; 1990), satisfaction with communication about sexual needs (Cupach & Comstock, 1990), existence of spirituality, physical affection, and honesty (Bell, Daly, & Gonzalez, 1987), use of idioms or pet names (Bruess & Pearson, 1993), low levels of hostility (Hafner & Spence, 1988), and low recollection of confrontational or negative comments (Sillars, Weisberg, Burggraf, & Zietlow, 1990) are all related to higher marital adjustment. Demandingness and withdrawal also predicted decline in relationship satisfaction of wives over time (Heavey, Christensen, & Malamuth, 1995). Measures of the quality of premarital communication also were predictive of lower marital adjustment (Larson & Holman, 1994; Smith, Vivian, & O'Leary, 1990).

From a personality perspective, coping capability, both of the individual and their spouse (Che, 1993), depression (Basco, Prager, Pita, & Tamir, 1992; Ulrich, Dani, Russell, & O'Hara, 1988), anxiety in wives and depression in husbands in short (1 to 6 years) marriages and personality factors (e.g. assertiveness for husbands, flexibility for wives) in long marriages (16 or more years) (Hafner & Spence, 1988), traditional (North American) attitudes (Lye & Biblarz, 1993), and adaptive attributions, such as making situational attributions

about spouse's intentions instead of dispositional (Bradbury & Fincham, 1992) were all related to marital quality.

In terms of clinical literature, intimacy has been shown to be affected by communication factors. Jacobson & Follette (1985) showed that couples receiving behavioral marital therapy (which has an almost exclusive focus on communication training and problem-solving techniques) achieved significant gains in both communication skills and marital satisfaction, with both effects persisting at six month follow-up. Iverson & Baucom (1990) demonstrated that subjects who improved in communication skills but not in their satisfaction with marriage failed to do so due to an ineffective application of those skills to the areas of the marriage which troubled them (i.e. sexuality, finances, etc.). Finally, Behrens, Snaders, & Halford (1990) showed that behavioral marital therapy led to significant reductions in communication negativity and that this change then translated into higher marital satisfaction.

Once again, this literature largely ignores the issue of later life marriages as well as the possible operation of bi-directional, circular systemic variables.

Empirical findings pertaining to later-life marriages

Having illustrated the importance of studying family-of-origin variables, it is also interesting to note that the majority of the literature on this subject fail to address these issues in later life couples. At this point, this lack of empirical information makes it especially difficult to determine the importance of a family-of-origin focus in marital therapy with later life couples. Currently, it is not

known whether effects such as those in the studies cited above exist in later life individuals. Along this vein, several questions remain unanswered, among them; do family-of-origin effects persist into older age? If so, what effect do they have on the intimate functioning of individuals in their marriages?

In addition to these unanswered questions, three factors highlight the importance of studying these processes in older couples. First, there is evidence that the later life individuals are concerned with a number of issues related to age that may affect their marriages. For example, the need for intimacy (Babchuk & Anderson, 1989; Bullard-Poe, Powell, & Mulligan, 1994), desire for sexual activity (Costello, 1975; Renshaw, 1983), increased incidence of physical problems, disease, and death in old age, as well as mental disorders in old age, (Rolland, 1994; Salokangas, Mattila, & Joukamaa, 1988), long term sexual dysfunction, unresolved grief, intergenerational issues, (Woody, 1989), death and dying issues (Genevay, 1986), morale (Lee, 1978), and physical attractiveness (Peterson & Miller, 1980) are issues that have been shown to be salient for older couples and also to have an effect on their marriages. Second, the strength of the marital relationship can be helpful for older couples dealing with these challenges which are largely unique to their population (Gilford, 1986). Finally, the growing proportion of elderly people in our population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1997) means that it is likely that marital therapists will encounter those in later life more frequently in their practices. Thus, it is important to understand the ways in which different aspects of family-of-origin approaches to marital therapy need to

be modified, discarded, and/or retained in order to more effectively serve the elderly.

Summary of Literature Review

Based on this review, it appears that a variety of family-of-origin variables affect marriages of adult offspring. However, it appears that there is little research which illuminates exactly what aspect of marriage that family-of-origin variables affect. All of the studies reviewed here focus on marital satisfaction or quality as the dependent variable. Therefore exactly which component of marital quality is affected by family-of-origin variables is unknown. It is possible that changes in intimacy account for the findings with respect to marital satisfaction. Thus, it is important to look more microanalytically at a variable such as intimacy.

Some other unknowns are whether or not such effects persist into old age. Gender differences in these effects have also not been well examined. Finally, the majority of the studies reviewed did not maintain couples together in analyses, thus yielding results about "husbands" and "wives" but not about "couples". Doing so would provide information not only about how an individuals' perceptions affect their own intimacy but also how their spouses' perceptions affect them, as well as how different combinations of spouses might affect intimacy differently. This is an important step in elucidating the operation of systemic variables, a step that is long overdue in empirical family therapy literature.

Given that perceptions of family-of-origin experiences have an effect on later relational functioning, it also becomes important to understand the processes or mechanisms through which these perceptions exert their effects. None of the studies reviewed here directly examined the existence of possible mediating variables. However, given the prevalence of communication and family-of-origin models of therapy (Nelson, Heilbrun, & Figley, 1993; Nichols & Schwartz, 1995; Wilcoxon, 1989), studying communication variables as a possible mediating variable is important because it helps to show the relative importance of a historical family-of-origin variable versus the operation of a current relationship process variable such as communication.

Hypotheses

Based on the review above, the following hypotheses were proposed for this study:

Hypothesis One

Regardless of their spouses' reports of family-of-origin distress, intimacy for husbands and wives reporting low distress in their family-of-origin will be significantly higher as a function of increasing distress in their own family-of-origin.

Hypothesis Two

Regardless of their own reports of family-of-origin distress, intimacy for individuals whose spouse reports low family-of-origin distress will be significantly higher than those whose spouse reports moderate or high family-of-origin distress.

Hypothesis Three

In those marriages where both husbands and wives reported low family-of-origin distress will have significantly higher intimacy scores than those marriages where both the individual and their spouse report high family-of-origin distress. Other than this specific test, there is insufficient basis to make any further predictions regarding the nature of the interaction between the two variables. At this point, the hypothesis is simply that there is a significant interaction, and that the same linear pattern that is hypothesized in hypotheses one and two will be found when both members of the couples' scores are taken into account.

Hypothesis Four

When affective communication and problem solving communication are entered as covariates into the model with emotional intimacy as the dependent variable, the main effects for family-of-origin distress will be reduced or disappear.

Method

Sampling and Subjects' Characteristics

A list of names and addresses were purchased from the Donnelly Corporation (1990), who guaranteed the names to be randomly selected from all 50 of the United States married and between the ages of 55 and 85. A packet of questionnaires for both husband and wife were sent to 7500 households throughout the United States. Of these, 982 (13%) were returned as undeliverable. Responses were received from 1941 households. Using Dillman's formula for calculating return rate, this yielded a 39% return, which is acceptable for social science surveys. Of those returned in the mail, 249 declined to participate and 1061 packets were received which contained either the husband's or wife's completed questionnaires but not both. A total of 631 completed sets of questionnaires from both husband and wife were returned. These 631 subjects were then examined on all relevant variables. Subjects' scores on the items making up the three scales of interest were placed together in a data set and the three scales were calculated. For each subject, any scale having more than 15% of the items with invalid values was considered as a missing case, yielding a total of 355 men and 364 women who had available data for all necessary variables. Table 1 contains further demographic information about the subjects.

Instruments

Family-of-Origin Health. Family-of-origin distress was measured with the Family History of Distress (FAM) subscale of Snyder's Marital Satisfaction

Inventory-Revised (MSI-R; 1997). The subscale is designed to retrospectively measure a person's perceptions of the degree of stress experienced in subjects' family-of-origin The scale is composed of nine items to which true-false responses are possible. Scores on this subscale range from 0 to 9. The higher the score, the more distressed the family-of-origin is considered. The MSI-R has also been shown to discriminate clinical couples from non-clinical couples (Fredman & Sherman, 1987). Snyder (1997) reported that Cronbach's alpha for the FAM was .78, with a test-retest coefficient of .84. Family-of-origin distress groups were created for analyses using the t-score ranges provided by Snyder (1997). These cutoff points were established by examining the percentage of those who scored low, mid-range, or high on the scale who also scored similarly on other informal clinical measures of family-of-origin distress (e.g. clinician reports).

Intimacy. Intimacy was measured using the Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships (PAIR; Olson & Schaefer, 1991). This instrument consists of six subscales which measure five types of intimacy: emotional, social, sexual, intellectual, and recreational. Of all the scales, Fredman & Sherman (1987) report that the Emotional Intimacy scale is the best for predicting scores on other questionnaires measuring marital constructs. Furthermore, they report that a composite score on the PAIR is not meaningful in and of itself but rather, scores on each subscale are used to interpret an individual's perceived or reported intimacy with their spouse. For these reasons, only the Emotional Intimacy (EI) scale was used for this study. Scores on the EI of PAIR range from 0 to 96, with

subjects responding on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) to 6 items. Higher scores indicate more reported intimacy. With respect to the instrument's validity, Fredman & Sherman (1987) report that the PAIR is correlated with a variety of family environment scales.

Affective Communication (AFC). The affective communication subscale of the MSI-R was used to assess subjects' perceptions and beliefs about how satisfied they are with the affection, support, disclosure, and empathy expressed in the relationship. This measure was used as a covariate in analyses, as was problem-solving communication, to be discussed below. This scale is composed of 13 true-false items, with scores ranging from 0 to 13. Cronbach's alpha and the coefficient of temporal stability for this subscale were .85 and .79, respectively (Snyder, 1997). To demonstrate the validity of the scale, it was compared with similar items on the Marital Adjustment Test (MAT; Locke & Wallace, 1958) and by examining clinician reports to see if their descriptions of the couple seemed to match their score. Results of this examination showed that the scale has acceptable validity for research.

Problem-Solving Communication (PSC). The problem-solving communication subscale of the MSI-R was used to measure this aspect of communication. This subscale deals with behaviors such as resolving difference, specific problem-solving skills, and the ability to discuss sensitive topics (Snyder, 1997). There are 19 true-false items on this subscale (yielding scores from 0 to 19) Cronbach's alpha and the coefficient of temporal stability for this subscale

were .89 and .82, respectively (Snyder, 1997). Validity was assessed in the same manner as in the AFC scale and showed acceptable validity to be used for research.

Design

A three by three analysis-of-variance was the primary analysis in this study with Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (1977) used as a post-hoc test to compare different types of couples based on combinations of husband and wife family-of-origin distress. As we have little basis to predict group differences at this point, a post-hoc test was chosen rather than a priori contrasts. The independent variables were wives' family-of-origin distress (high, medium, low) and husbands' family-of-origin distress (high, medium, low), creating a three by three factorial design. The dependent variable was emotional intimacy, as measured by the Emotional Intimacy scale of the PAIR instrument.

Two analyses were conducted, one with wives' EI (WEI) scores as the dependent variable and one with husbands' (HEI). The choice of this design was based on the importance of ensuring that analyses were based on couple combinations of family-of-origin distress, not individuals. By creating groups of hiXhi, hiXlo, loXhi, etc., the effects of different couple family-of-origin combinations on the dependent variable were assessed.

Results

Table 2 identifies the means, standard deviations, and ranges for all variables in the study. Husbands' intimacy scores (M = 73.67, SD = 19.94) were

significantly higher than wives' (M = 68.41, SD = 22.63; t = 5.77, p = .000). The sample appeared to contain a variety of family-of-origin background scores as well as communication skills. About 34% of husbands and 35% of wives scored in Snyder's "good" category of family-of-origin distress. The "possible problem" category contained 44% of husbands and 39% of wives. Finally, the "problem" category contained 21% of husbands and 27% of wives.

Table 3 shows descriptive statistics for husbands' emotional intimacy scores as a function of husbands' and wives' family-of-origin score groups, including means, standard deviations, and cell sizes, as well as row and column totals for the husbands' ANOVA model. Table 4 contains the same information for the wives' ANOVA model.

Hypothesis One

The hypothesis that intimacy scores would be affected by subjects' own family-of-origin distress was tested by examining main effects in the models. In the husbands' model (see Table 5), the main effect for Husbands' family-of-origin distress group (HFAM) on their own intimacy (HEI) was significant (F = 13.56, p = .000). Post Hoc examination showed that the mean HEI score of group 1, low distress (M = 81.20, SD = 15.30) was significantly higher than the means of group 2 (M = 71.25, SD = 20.93) and group 3 (M = 67.39, SD = 20.82). Groups 2 and 3 did not differ significantly.

The main effect (Table 6) for Wives' family-of-origin distress group (WFAM) on their own intimacy (WEI) was significant (F = 6.67, p = .001). Post

Hoc examination showed that the mean WEI for group 1 (M = 74.02, SD = 20.45) was higher than the means for both group 2 and 3 but 2 and 3 did not differ.

This hypothesis appears to have been supported. Both husbands and wives reporting low distress have higher intimacy than those reporting high family-of-origin distress.

Hypothesis Two

In the husbands' model (Table 5), the main effect for WFAM, as it relates to husbands' emotional intimacy was examined. The main effect was significant (F = 3.44, p = .033). Post Hoc examination revealed that the mean intimacy score of group 1 (low distress in wives' family-of-origin) was higher than group 3 (group 1; M = 77.45 versus group 3; M = 69.62) but not significantly higher than group 2 (moderate distress; M = 73.02). Groups 2 and 3 did not differ significantly either.

In the wives' model (Table 6), the main effect for HFAM on WEI was examined and found to be significant (F = 6.81, p = .001). Post Hoc analyses show that group 1 was significantly higher than group 2 or 3, with group 2 and 3 not differing significantly. Thus, this hypothesis was supported. Subjects whose spouse reported low family-of-origin distress reported more intimacy than those having spouses who reported high family-of-origin distress.

Hypothesis Three

The interaction term for HFAM X WFAM was not significant in the HEI model (F = 1.945, p = .103; see Table 5). In the WEI model, the interaction term

for HFAM X WFAM was significant (F = 2.674, p = .032; see Table 6). The hypothesis that there would be a significant interaction was supported only in the wives' model.

An examination of the post-hoc tests (Table 3) shows that husbands who have low family-of-origin distress and are married to a woman with the same have significantly higher intimacy than husbands in marriages where both he and his wife come from distressed family-of-origin backgrounds. The pattern of data that is elucidated by the post-hoc test shows little more than can be ascertained from examining the results of hypotheses one and two; there seems to be a linear relationship between both HFAM and WFAM and emotional intimacy in husbands. Furthermore, the results of this post-hoc test show that as long as either husbands or wives have low family-of-origin distress, husbands' intimacy does not differ significantly.

For wives (Table 4), the same pattern seems to characterize the data; as long as one of the two spouses reports low family-of-origin distress, wives' intimacy does not decrease significantly as a function of increasing family-of-origin distress in the other. Examining the results of the post-hoc test, it appears that the group of both spouses with low distress (1-1), with the wife moderate and husband low (2-1), wife low, husband high (1-3), and wife high, husband low (3-1) seem to cluster together in terms of their intimacy scores.

Hypothesis Four

To test the hypothesis that affective and problem solving communication would reduce the effects of family-of-origin on intimacy, the husbands' model was first examined. In the first run of the husbands' ANOVA model, both main effects for husbands' and wives' family-of-origin distress were found to be significant. When the ANOVA was redone as and ANCOVA, with affective and problem-solving communication entered as covariates, neither main effect reached significance (see Table 7) and both covariates were found to be significant (HAFC, $F = 19175.65$, $p = .000$; HPSC, $F = 3399.52$, $p = .000$).

In the first wives' model, both main effects were found to be significant. When covariates of affective and problem-solving communication were entered into the analysis, neither main effect reached significance (see Table 8) and both covariates were found to be significant (WAFC, $F = 20322.75$, $p = .000$; WPSC, $F = 7201.32$, $p = .000$).

In both the husbands' and the wives' model, this hypothesis was supported; when taken into account, communication factors account for variance in such a manner as to render the effects of FAM background non-significant.

Discussion

The main conclusion that can be drawn from the results of this study is that the effect of one's family-of-origin distress continues to exert an influence on one's emotional intimacy even into later life marriage. Furthermore, the distress experienced by one's spouse can compound this influence. These effects seem to

be consistent across gender, except for some interesting patterns in wives' reports that suggest that for women who had low distress, they may have no more trouble with intimacy when married to a man from a highly distressing family-of-origin background than one from an environment of low family-of-origin distress.

These findings are similar to findings from others studies in demonstrating the impact that family-of-origin variables can have on relational functioning. Several studies have shown that reported difficulties in one's family-of-origin adversely affects relational functioning for both men and women. (e.g. Canfield, Hovstadt, & Fenell, 1992; Couillard, 1990; Farnsworth, 1988; Wilcoxson & Hovestadt, 1985, 1983). The findings of this study show that this relationship between family-of-origin and relational functioning holds true even in later life marriage.

The findings of this study also support the notion that family-of-origin effects may occur through current relational process, namely affective communication and problem-solving communication. In both the wives' and the husbands' models, these variables were significant factors in explaining the effect of family-of-origin distress on intimacy. This should be tested in further research with regression and structural equation models.

It appears that family-of-origin variables may affect intimacy by endowing individuals with a set of skills which they take with them into adult relationships. As they experience intimacy in these relationships, these skills, will assist them in

achieving desired levels of intimacy. If distress in the family-of-origin has left them without these skills, they will suffer reduced intimacy.

Theoretical Implications

Primarily, these findings are important in that they demonstrate that the effects of family-of-origin variables do indeed persist into later life marriages. Whereas this effect is not as strong as it appears to be in earlier life marriages (e.g. Holman & Birch, 1998; Larson, Taggart, & Birch, 1998), it nonetheless exists. This lends support to the basic assumptions of psychodynamic theory that early childhood experience in the family-of-origin forms the basis for the extent to which individuals are successful in future adult relationships. This assumption has gained consistent support for earlier marriages. That this same effect was also observed in the current study to exist in later life marriages speaks to the power and persistence of family-of-origin variables. Whereas some theorists (e.g. Williamson, 1982) have speculated that family-of-origin effects do not last past age forty, the results of the current study suggest otherwise.

These findings also raise the questions for psychodynamic theorists of exactly how, i.e. through what process do these early experiences affect later relational functioning? Whereas the communication variables examined in this study imply that it is through the manner in which spouses communicate that family-of-origin variables exert their effects, still unanswered is the question of precisely how communication is affected. In other words, it appears that distress in the family-of-origin leads to less effective communication skills, in turn leading

to poor relationship intimacy. Why it is that some people learn to communicate effectively and some don't, given that both came from distressed families-of-origin is still unanswered. How does childhood distress in the family-of-origin lead to poor communication? Is it through learning? Will "unlearning" be sufficient to change the distress or will it be necessary to first remove the "thorn" that caused the wound? The findings of this study raise these questions and though they do not inherently "disprove" psychodynamic notions, they certainly create the need for theory to include these variables and elucidate them through further empirical observation.

The findings of this study also support the notion from developmental theory that issues of attachment and early development can continue to exert effects at later stages of life and that even at the "later life" stage of development, people are still resolving issues raised in early stages. At this point, all that is known regarding this issue is that later life couples perceptions of family-of-origin distress are statistically related to intimacy and at least partially mediated by communication. What is not known is at a deeper process level: How do these issues affect intimacy? Is the connection between family-of-origin, communication, and intimacy overt or subconscious? Are subjects aware of the times they are adversely affected by family-of-origin issues or not? Are there patterns that exist or are these effects random? For example, do an individuals' perceptions of his fathers' treatment of his mother during the last years of his life affect how he treats his wife during the same developmental stage? The precise

process through which family-of-origin distress affects intimacy is only suggested by the findings of this study. However, the results do support the findings of other studies (c.f. Holman, Birch, Carroll, Doxey, Larson, & Linford, 1999). These studies suggest that although the direct effects of distal family-of-origin variables may be small, the indirect effects between distal family-of-origin variables and more proximal variables such as communication, as well as the effects between the proximal variables and relationship quality variables, when considered in conjunction with one another, are quite strong. Thus, although the family-of-origin may not be the most robust predictor of relationship quality, it is a powerful piece of the puzzle containing other distal variables and the proximal variables through which they exert their effects.

With regards to the notion that there would be a systemic relationship between spouses as a function of their family-of-origin distress, some support was found. It was expected that an interaction would occur between the husbands' and the wives' reports of family-of-origin distress, that is that the two family-of-origin backgrounds would have an effect on intimacy that was greater than just the sum of the effects of the two backgrounds. This hypothesis was only supported for wives in that no such interaction was found in the husbands' model. This is consistent with prior findings (e.g. Couillard, 1990; Holman, Birch, Carroll, Doxey, Larson, & Linford, 1999) which show that wives' relationship quality is affected by both her own and her husbands' family-of-origin variables whereas his is not. Many plausible hypotheses exist to explain this relationship, with the

predominant ones being related to the wives' tendency to be the "relationship architect" (Wamboldt and Reiss; 1989), and feminist notions that men have more freedom to construct their sense of marital quality from other sources in society such as career whereas women are more dependent on the marriage for meeting their psychological needs (Holman & Birch, 1999). Several other hypotheses exist for this and require further analyses to test them.

Additionally, the systemic hypothesis that spouses' family-of-origin distress would affect each others' intimacy was supported, further suggesting that spouses' family-of-origin distress has an effect on each others' intimacy.

A closer look at the data, especially the post-hoc tests, further points to a possibility that some systemic variables are in operation. As explained above, it appears that women in the mid-range of family-of-origin distress may be influenced adversely by men in mid-range or high range groups. These findings are tentative and further research is needed to see if these findings will appear in studies more specifically designed to detect them. Specifically, although the means of the groups were statistically significant, none of the mean values for a given cell falls outside one standard deviation from the overall mean of the group. Therefore it is important to look at couples where the wives score in the mid-range and the husbands in the mid and high ranges and then examine those wives whose intimacy scores did fall outside a standard deviation. Then independent variables such as past and current abuse, alcohol use, social networks, and others can be used to see if they differentiate those with clinically low intimacy scores

and those in more normal ranges. This would begin to elucidate more of the possible mediating variables between family-of-origin experience and current relationship intimacy.

Limitations

Analysis of variance models were chosen as the analyses for this study so that an evaluation of systemic variables could be accomplished by using both a husband and a wife variable to create couple groups. However, a path model or Structural Equations Model would probably yield more overall information, such as possible bi-directional pathways, and the relative strength of the contribution of various variables on one another. Re-examining this data using SEM should be done in the future.

Recommendations for Future Research

Perhaps the most compelling question that remains unanswered from these data is to understand why women who come from good family-of-origin backgrounds and marry men who come from problematic ones report having the highest intimacy. This finding is unique only to this one subgroup in the design; all other groups follow the general pattern of a negative linear relationship between intimacy and family-of-origin distress. A possible explanation for this finding is that men in these marriages needed to marry someone strong in communication skills, especially affective communication, to learn things they failed to learn in their family-of-origin. Having done so, they are able to learn and because of the need to enroll in this learning, have actually surpassed many others

who are not so compelled to work on this issue. The result is that women in these marriages feel a sense of intimacy at having to teach their husbands and maintain the emotional climate of the home.

This hypothesis gains support from co-variate analyses which showed that when entered as co-variates into the same analysis as wives' emotional intimacy, both affective communication and problem solving communication showed the same pattern, with this cell in question having low scores indicating that these wives have little or no problem with issues of communication. If answered, this question also leads to understanding with respect to what happens to wives' intimacy when men with problematic family-of-origin backgrounds marry women who have some or many problems from the family-of-origin; their intimacy seems to suffer much more than in any other group. Perhaps what occurs is that women who are not endowed with positive learning from the family-of-origin are not able to help their husbands who also lack this learning.

To examine these issues, studies should isolate this particular group of women and begin doing more exploratory research. This would elicit questions which could inform theory and lead to more specific hypotheses.

A related question concerns why some individuals have high intimacy levels in spite of distressing family-of-origin backgrounds. Whereas the results of this study have begun to suggest that communication variables account for a great deal to do with this, it still does not completely answer the question of how those people came to learn the skills. In the group discussed above, it was

hypothesized, based on theory, that the spouse provided the tutoring necessary to overcome any skill deficits. However, in the groups where both spouses came from distressing family-of-origin backgrounds but nonetheless have high intimacy, how was this accomplished? These couples appear to have high communication skills; did they learn from each other? Were they more likely to have engaged in some sort of marital intervention (i.e. family life education or therapy)? Or perhaps surrogate figures in their lives such as teachers, friends, church leaders, or other relatives taught them. These questions could be answered by examining these subgroups more closely.

Other interesting questions that remain unanswered are what other mediating effects may exist, whether they are more powerful than the communication variables or not (e.g. attachment), and how they interact with communication variables to lead to intimacy. Some interesting gender questions include whether or not mothers and fathers may have had different contributions to the effects that the family-of-origin distress had on adult children's intimacy, why husbands' and wives' family-of-origin backgrounds appeared to operate independently in their effects on husbands' intimacy but not on wives', and how these differences play out in interactions with one another. Finally, whereas the results suggest that the family-of-origin effect on marital quality of adult children appears to have persisted into later life marriages, it is still uncertain if they will persist into the elderly period of life (i.e. older than 70). An examination of these

same data using SEM models should provide an interesting next step for answer some of these questions.

Clinical Implications and Recommendations

In her survey of AAMFT Approved Clinical Supervisors, Wilcoxon (1989) found that 82% of the supervisors reported that family-of-origin theory had a "moderate" to "considerable" (p. 211) influence on their clinical practices. Additionally, Nelson, Heilbrun, & Figley (1993) found that 24% of AFTA members and AAMFT Approved Supervisors reported that they were primarily transgenerational in their approach to therapy. Another 20% reported that they used at least some transgenerational concepts in their approach. The findings of this study affirm this fairly widespread use of intergenerational ideas in marital therapy, as well as suggest some alternatives.

These findings also imply that communication variables may be an effective target to assist in the increase of intimacy in later life couples. Although not specified as targeted outcomes of intergenerational therapy approaches, it is also possible that one effect of intergenerational approaches is to increase positive communication. It appears that both communication/process models of therapy and family-of-origin models may be effective at increasing intimacy in later life couples.

However, to maximize effectiveness, more needs to be understood about how the models differentially impact intimacy, and which models will be more effective for which populations and in what sequence or combination. The basic

question that remains unanswered regards the relative importance of insight (i.e. learning about the family-of-origin) and behavior change (i.e. learning to communicate differently); to what extent should therapy focus on these two issues and how can therapists know when to focus on which, how much, and what to do about each. Of course, family-of-origin and current process variables may well affect more than just intimacy and thus more study is needed to determine how the different models could work more effectively in conjunction or in sequence with one another to impact these and other important variables.

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Appendix One

Instruments

From Snyder's (1997) Marital Satisfaction Inventory - Revised (MSI-R)

Affective Communication Scale (AFC)

My partner almost always responds with understanding to my mood at a given moment.

It is sometimes easier to confide in a friend than in my partner.

There is a great deal of love and affection expressed in our relationship.

My partner doesn't take me seriously enough sometimes.

Whenever I'm feeling sad, my partner makes me feel loved and happy again.

Sometimes I feel as though my partner doesn't really need me.

Sometimes my partner just can't understand the way I feel.

Just when I need it the most, my partner makes me feel important.

My partner does many different things to show me that he or she loves me.

I feel free to express openly strong feelings of sadness to my partner.

Sometimes I wonder just how much my partner really does love me.

Whenever he or she is feeling down, my partner comes to me for support.

My partner keeps most of his or her feelings inside.

Family History of Distress Scale (FAM)

My childhood was probably happier than most.

I was very anxious as a young person to get away from my family.

My parents' marriage was happier than most.

All the marriages on my side of the family appear to be quite successful.

My parents didn't communicate with each other as well as they should have.

My parents never really understood me.

I had a very happy home life.

The members of my family were always very close to each other.

I often wondered whether my parents' marriage would end in divorce.

Problem-Solving Communication Scale (PSC)

When my partner and I have differences of opinion, we sit down and discuss them.

There are some things my partner and I just can't talk about.

During an argument with my partner, each of us airs our feelings completely.

Even when angry with me, my partner is able to appreciate my viewpoints.

A lot of our arguments seem to end in depressing stalemates.

My partner and I need to improve the way we settle our differences.

My partner is so touchy on some subjects that I can't even mention them.

When we argue, my partner and I often seem to go over and over the same old things.

My partner's feelings are too easily hurt.

Minor disagreements with my partner often end up in big arguments.

When arguing, we manage quite well to restrict our focus to the important issues.

My partner has no difficulty accepting criticism.

My partner sometimes seems intent upon changing some aspect of my personality.

My partner and I seem able to go for days sometimes without settling our differences.

Our arguments frequently end up with one of us feeling hurt or crying.

When we disagree, my partner helps us to find alternatives acceptable to both of us.

My partner and I are often unable to disagree with one another without losing our tempers.

My partner often fails to understand my point of view on things.

My partner often complains that I don't understand him or her.

From Olson's (undated) Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships Scale

Emotional Intimacy Scale (EI)

My partner listens to me when I need someone to talk to.

I can state my feelings without him/her getting defensive.

I often feel distant from my partner.

My partner can really understand my hurts and joys.

I feel neglected at times by my partner.

I sometimes feel lonely when we're together.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

		Husbands	Wives
age	mean	64.6	61.25
	SD	4.45	5.87
	range	49-79	40-75
length of marriage	mean	35.60	34.24
	SD	11.58	12.17
	range	2-52	3.5-52
number of children	mean	2.94	3.20
	SD	1.80	2.03
	range	0-12	0-12
income	mode	$20,000-$29,000	$20,000-$29,000
	range	9,999 to $70,000+	9,999 to $70,000+
religious affiliation	mode	Protestant (63.0%)	Protestant (63.4%)
	others	Catholic (21.7%)	Catholic (22.0%)
		Jewish (4.3%)	Jewish (3.7%)
		other (10.9%)	other (14.7%)

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges for Independent, Dependent, and Covariate Variables

	Husbands (N=355)			Wives (N=365)		
	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range
Emotional Intimacy	73.67	19.94	16-96	68.41	22.63	4-96
Family-of-origin Distress	3.14	2.61	0-9	3.36	2.80	0-9
Affective Communication	2.40	3.00	0-13	3.35	3.67	0-13
Problem Solving Communication	4.88	4.17	0-18	5.50	4.66	0-19

Note: Higher scores on the intimacy score mean higher intimacy whereas for the other three scales, higher scores indicate higher distress.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and Post-hoc Tests for Husbands' Emotional Intimacy as a Function of Husbands' and Wives' Family-of-Origin Distress Groups

	WFAM 1	WFAM 2	WFAM 3	Row Totals
HFAM 1				
M	83.56_a	78.26_a	82.31_a	81.20
SD	15.66	15.61	13.73	15.30
n	45	46	26	117
HFAM 2				
M	73.45_a	70.93_b	68.80_b	71.25
SD	19.32	22.98	20.41	20.93
n	58	56	45	159
HFAM 3				
M	75.43_a	69.49_b	56.87_b	67.39
SD	15.81	20.93	21.30	20.82
n	21	35	23	79
Column Totals				
M	77.45	73.02	69.62	73.67
SD	17.98	20.42	20.99	19.94
n	124	137	94	355

Note: HFAM refers to Husbands' Family-of-Origin Distress Scores and WFAM to the Wives'. 1 = Low distress, 2 = moderate, 3 = high distress. Subscripts indicate results of post-hoc analyses; means with the same subscript are not significantly different.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics and Post-hoc Tests for Wives' Emotional Intimacy Scores as a Function of Husbands' and Wives' Family-of-Origin Distress Groups

	WFAM 1	WFAM 2	WFAM 3	Row Totals
HFAM 1				
M	79.43_{a}	74.40_{a}	66.57_{a}	74.62
SD	18.46	17.90	25.70	20.56
N	49	45	28	122
HFAM 2				
M	67.12_{ab}	65.21_{b}	63.66_{b}	65.46
SD	21.93	23.41	23.84	22.91
N	59	56	47	162
HFAM 3				
M	80.17_{a}	57.83_{b}	57.57_{b}	64.10
SD	15.09	25.60	22.97	24.29
N	23	35	23	81
Column Totals				
M	74.02	66.35	63.06	68.22
SD	20.45	23.10	24.16	22.88
N	131	136	98	365

Note: HFAM refers to Husbands' Family-of-Origin Distress Scores and WFAM to the Wives'. 1 = Low distress, 2 = moderate, 3 = high distress. Subscripts indicate results of post-hoc tests; means with the same subscripts are not significantly different.

Table 5

ANOVA Results for Husbands: Emotional Intimacy Scores by Husbands' Family History of Distress Group and Wives' Family History of Distress Group

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig of F
Main Effects	13161.190	4	3290.298	9.119	.000
HFAMGROUP	9786.270	2	4893.135	13.562	.000
WFAMGROUP	2485.161	2	1242.580	3.444	.033
2-Way Interactions	2806.314	4	701.579	1.945	.103
HFAMGR X WFAMGR	2806.314	4	701.579	1.945	.103

Table 6

ANOVA Results for Wives: Emotional Intimacy Scores by Wives' Family History of Distress Group and Wives' Family History of Distress Group

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig of F
Main Effects	14034.348	4	3508.587	7.289	.000
HFAMGROUP	6552.544	2	3276.272	6.806	.001
WFAMGROUP	6419.946	2	3209.973	6.669	.001
2-Way Interactions	5148.381	4	1287.095	2.674	.032
HFAMGR X WFAMGR	5148.381	4	1287.095	2.674	.032

Table 7

ANCOVA Table for Husbands: Emotional Intimacy by Husband' Family-of-Origin Distress, Wives' Family-of-origin Distress with Affective and Problem-Solving Communication

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Significance of F
Covariates	88727.872	2	44363.936	299.314	.000
HAFC	19175.646	1	19175.646	129.374	.000
HPSC	3399.523	1	3399.523	22.936	.000
Main Effects	847.164	4	211.791	1.429	.224
HFAMGR	333.580	2	166.790	1.125	.326
WFAMGR	490.035	2	245.018	1.653	.193
2-Way Interactions	664.119	4	166.030	1.120	.347
HFAMGR X WFAMGR	664.119	4	166.030	1.120	.347

Table 8

ANCOVA Table for Wives: Emotional Intimacy by Husband' Family-of-Origin Distress, Wives' Family-of-Origin Distress with Affective and Problem-Solving Communication

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Significance of F
Covariates	124461.059	2	62230.530	351.580	.000
WAFC	20322.753	1	20322.753	114.816	.000
WPSC	7201.317	1	7201.317	40.685	.000
Main Effects	187.942	4	46.985	.265	.900
HFAMGR	130.147	2	65.073	.368	.693
WFAMGR	67.426	2	33.713	.190	.827
2-Way Interactions	892.437	4	223.109	1.260	.285
HFAMGR X WFAMGR	892.437	4	223.109	1.260	.285