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LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY
School of Behavioral Health
in conjunction with the
Faculty of Graduate Studies

Negotiating Marital Care: Co-Creating the Connected Egalitarian Relationship

by

Lena Lopez Bradley

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Marital and Family Therapy

June 2013

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Each person whose signature appears below certifies that this dissertation in his/her opinion is adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Negotiating Marital Care: Co-Creating the Connected Egalitarian Relationship

by

Lena Lopez Bradley

Doctor of Philosophy, Marital & Family Therapy
Loma Linda University, June 2013
Dr. Carmen Knudson-Martin, Chairperson

Research suggests that couples seek connection and equality within the marital relationship, yet they continue to struggle due to the continued impact of traditional gender ideologies (Coontz, 2006; Knudson-Martin & Mahoney 2009). The current body of literature reveals little about how specific relational negotiation practices contribute to attaining an equal and connected relationship over time. This study utilizes grounded theory methodology and a feminist social constructionist framework to explore how traditional gender constructs impact couples' ability to negotiate connected egalitarianism within relationship over time.

The analysis of 68 interviews with two sets of couples—parents of children 5 years old and younger (i.e. short-term couples) and couples together at least 10 years with the oldest child aged 6-16 (i.e. long-term couples) —identified relational gender role ambiguity as a core dimension facing couples. The ambiguity resides in the desire to maintain connection in the relationship despite conflicting internal and external messages about traditional gender beliefs and shifting beliefs and practices that revolve around egalitarian ideals. Couples' responded through four primary styles of relationship

management: gendered disengagement, gendered reciprocity, relational disengagement, and relational reciprocity.

Results indicate the need for both partners to engage in explicit relational practices that promote reciprocal emotional connection. Overall, men describe increasing their relational awareness in the marital dyad, but women continue to maintain primary responsibility for the push towards relational awareness. Women raise men's relational awareness primarily by increasing explicit negotiation practices. As a result, many men in the study report learning how to acknowledge and recognize the value of emotional connectedness for the health and longevity of relationship.

Findings provide important information about how couples are attempting to take evolving relationship ideologies and create a contemporary relational model that represents the connection couples seek to achieve. In addition, this study enhances the field of marriage and family therapy in ways to not only bring about more awareness for couples but assist in creating more connection and equality within marriage. Finally, these findings highlight that partner negotiation is necessary at all stages of relational development.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Negotiating Marital Care and Equality in Couple Relationships

The state of the contemporary marriage in the United States is in flux. Though marriage is more optional, it is still viewed as the ideal for many men and women (Cherlin, 2005). One might argue, that the days where traditional gender ideals that dominated male/female interactions are over. Unfortunately, research suggests that inequality within the marital dyad persists due in large part to long held traditional gender scripts about male/female roles (Mahoney & Knudson-Martin, 2000). Most contemporary heterosexual partners get married to create a relationship, to join with another person in hopes of creating and maintaining connection (Johnson, 2004). Many couples also report that it is not enough to love each other but that they want equality within their marriage as well (Gerson, 2010; Goudreau & Progress 2010). The challenge lies somewhere between not only how to achieve equality in marriage but to maintain connection over the life of the relationship at the same time. The aim here is to examine the negotiations couples utilize in attempting to co-create a connected egalitarian relationship. A relationship where both partners are equally committed to the care and connection expressed within the relationship.

During the life course of a marriage a multitude of factors impact and shape the lived experience of the couple. Marriage, like the family itself, is an evolving system that constantly redefines roles and rules within and between participants' throughout different stages of the life cycle (McGoldrick, Carter, Garcia-Preto, 2010). It's easy to understand how demands of work, family, children, finances, and other responsibilities can take

precedence over efforts to maintain connection with one's partner, let alone focus on achieving equality. For example, early within marriage, couples may need to pay particular attention to demands for child-care and how it may impact work schedules and/or partner time spent together (Craig & Mullen, 2010). While later in the marriage, when children tend to become more independent, roles and responsibilities would need to shift again. During each stage of the relationship couples need to negotiate a multitude of issues and inherent challenges, all while attempting to maintain relationship (McGoldrick, Carter, Garcia-Preto, 2010). From this perspective one could see how challenging it may be for couples to make their marriages last.

Quite often, heterosexual couples seek therapeutic intervention claiming that issues such as conflict over fairness, a break down in communication, and/or a lack of connection plague their relationship (Doss, Simpson, & Christensen, 2004). Issues such as these are often rooted in long-standing and deeply imbedded concepts of gender, power, equality, and connection playing out within the marital dyad (Greenberg & Goldman, 2008). Marriage and Family therapists face the challenge of assisting couples with finding effective ways to overcome these issues and develop the type of relationship couples desire (Johnson, 2005). Thus, it is the responsibility of researchers in the field of Marriage and Family Therapy to not only continually examine issues of gender, equality, and connection from the lived experiences of heterosexual couples, but to also offer guidance in ways to promote relational well-being with the couples that enter the therapeutic setting (Johnson, 2003).

Understanding the interplay of gender, equality, and relational connection involves complexities on multiple levels. Though the current societal message about the

ability for men and women to achieve equality in their relationships is prevalent, researchers consistently find that this is often not the case (Steil, 1997). In fact, studies demonstrate that while couples talk about their marriage in terms of equality the actual practice of equality is still limited (Hochschild & Machung, 2003; Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 1996). The purpose of this study is to examine the actual practices that couples utilize as they attempt to co-create a connected egalitarian relationship over the course of their relationship.

Background

Historical definitions of male and female have been clearly divided. Men have been traditionally characterized as the breadwinner, distant, and independent. Male values revolve around work, education, decision-making, and the ability to be in control (Perrone, 2009). Women, on the other hand, are thought of more as the caretakers of the family, nurturing, emotional, and dependent. Traditional female values revolve around the well being of others, the home, children, and connection (Eastwick, et. al, 2006). These female characteristics are often viewed as a sign of weakness where as male characteristics are traditionally viewed as strength.

The historical level of dichotomy has created a gender divide that is so socially embedded that people continue to find it difficult to shift ways of thinking and interacting (Coontz, 2006). The gender dichotomy, where one gender is viewed as strong and the other weak, inevitably creates power differentials between partners, thus creating marital inequality (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009). In fact, research consistently suggests that the inequality of power between men and women significantly contribute to marital

distress (Dallos & Dallos, 1997).

Despite decades of social and political change men and women continue to struggle with shifting ideals of gender. Though men and women may report that they view each other in more equal terms, despite their best intentions, they continue to practice traditional gender roles in their day-to-day interactions (Bittman & Pixley, 1997; Rosenbluth, Steil, & Whitcomb, 1998). As a result, couples today face the challenge of negotiating between traditional gender ideologies and the desire for a more connected egalitarian relationship (Knudson Martin & Mahoney, 2009).

Research suggests that many of today's couples seek a relationship where both partners feel a sense of equality and connection (Gerson, 2010). However, couples continue to lack the model on which to base new definitions of the type of relationship they seek (Bradley, 2009). Couples are often unaware of how their specific interactions may or may not contribute to the ability to achieve a level of connection and equality they desire. It is also likely that partners may be unaware of the larger social and political context that greatly impacts personal perceptions of gender, power, and equality throughout the life of their relationships.

Partners may enter a relationship with ideals of mutual connection and equality but over time a multitude of factors impact the ability to sustain the practice of these ideals. For example, early in a marriage partners may be able to identify ways to pay attention to issues of equality and shared labor but as demands increase and children join the relationship focus on equality may shift to simply keeping up with the demands of every day life (Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Craig & Mullan, 2010). To sustain the practice of connection and equality within the relationship over time requires consistent re-

negotiation of practices and focus on how this gets managed between partners (Hurst, 2005). This study seeks to understand these management practices and give voice to the lived experiences contemporary couples face.

Objective and Purpose of this Study

The central research question is how do couples negotiate the tension between traditional gender ideologies and the desire for a connected egalitarian relationship over time? Sub-questions include; 1) What are the processes by which couples are co-creating a model of a connected egalitarian relationship?, 2) To what extent do traditional gender ideologies continue to be a part of couples interactions and how do these beliefs & practices relate to couples goals of equality and connection?, and 3) How do issues of power impact the negotiation process?

Rationale

The aim of this study is to build upon previous research that suggests couples are striving for more connection and equality within their relationships (Jonathan & Knudson-Martin, 2012). Decades of research has examined the challenges of creating and maintaining equality within marriage and feminist theorists have developed theory on ways couples can share more connection (Miller, 2008). However, limited research is available regarding the lived experience of couples' attempts to achieve a connected egalitarian relationship over time. The study's contribution is the aspect of partners' attention to equally shared connection, in that a large body of literature focuses on equality in terms of shared work but little on equally shared interactions that promote

mutually shared connection. Secondly, to gain better understanding about the processes by which couples negotiate and manage traditional gender ideologies in order to attain connection and equality with their relationships. Finally, an aim is to provide marriage and family therapists with grounded research regarding current couple issues in hopes that it will assist in therapeutic gains.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study uses both feminist and social constructionist frameworks to examine the negotiation process couples practice while attempting to co-create a connected egalitarian relationship. This study will specifically utilize the branch of feminist theory, developed by feminist scholars' Jean Baker Miller, Judith Jordan, and Janet Surrey of the Stone Center, that highlights connection and mutual growth between partners that fosters mutually enhancing relationships (Miller and Stiver, 1997). First, a discussion of several major goals of feminist theory is provided to establish the framework for developing the concept of the connected egalitarian relationship. From this feminist perspective, the definition of the connected egalitarian relationship is provided. Also, an exploration into the concept of power is provided to help understand how it continues to impact the ability for couples to develop and maintain a connected egalitarian relationship.

Next, Social Constructionist theory will be utilized here to highlight the interactional processes and taken-for granted traditional gender assumptions that occur between partners as they attempt to negotiate and co-create a connected egalitarian relationship. The concepts of equality and connection are explored through the lens of Social Constructionism to demonstrate how they are both developed, defined, and practiced within implicit and explicit interactional processes. Ultimately, the overarching theoretical framework provided here focuses on the co-creation of relationship and its importance for mutual partner growth.

The Feminist Framework

For decades feminists have challenged gender inequality and its impact on how men and women relate within the domestic sphere. A core of feminist critique is to examine the practices of inequality within the marital dyad and bring to the surface taken for granted gender assumptions. There is recognition that there are socially constructed gender structures inherent in family life (Fox & Murry, 2000). For example, feminism challenges the notion that women are "supposed" to be primarily responsible for maintaining family relationships and providing the lions share of emotion work within partner interactions (Hochschild & Machung, 2003; Erickson, 2005). In fact, Lyness & Lyness (2007) suggest that one of the recent major movements in feminist literature focuses on examining how couples maintain mutual connection and continue to challenge power dynamics that may impact the ability to renegotiate nurturing roles. From a feminist perspective the concepts of gender and power cannot be understood apart from each other. Rampage (1994, 2002) suggests that feminist research needs to specifically examine the ways in which men and women experience their problems and negotiate gender ideologies within their relationships. This researcher will utilize a feminist lens to explore how engrained notions of gender and power continue to impact the development of a connected egalitarian relationship.

The Connected Egalitarian Relationship

This study specifically utilizes the work of the Stone Center's concept of connection within relationship as the framework for understanding relational development. Though the work from the Stone Center is a psychological and human

development model in particular, it offers a useful perspective on relational growth that can also help to understand marital processes. According to the model, people yearn to be connected to others and relationship is both the process and the goal of human development (Miller & Stiver, 1997). In essence, humans need connections throughout the life span to grow and develop (Jordan, 2009). Thus, the concept of marital connection is defined as an active process between both partners that promotes mutuality in regards to empowerment, empathy, respect, authenticity, and safety (Miller, 1988). There is an overarching premise that all human growth develops out of relationship and that growth-fostering relationships are essential to all people (Miller 2008).

Family therapy researchers, Silverstein, Buxbaum, Tuttle, Knudson-Martin, & Huenergardt (2006) identify a relationship directed orientation similar to the Stone Center's self-in relationship work that explores both components of connection and egalitarianism. From this orientation a connected egalitarian relationships involves the following characteristics:

1. An expectation of reciprocal attunement to the needs of the relationship or each other.
2. Partners evolve and express personal thoughts, feelings, and needs in the context of the relationship.
3. Views decisions as shared and determined by what is best for the relationship overall.
4. Believes each person should support the needs of the relationship.

(Silverstein, et.al, 2006)

Partners who demonstrate a commitment to the overall welfare of the relationship and reciprocal attention to each other's thoughts, feelings, and needs would be identified as participating in a connected egalitarian relationship. There is recognition that both attaining and maintaining this level of relationship is an ongoing evolving process that

requires the commitment of each partner. While it is anticipated that there will be periods within the relationship when this ideal is not met, due to the level of each partner's commitment, the overall desire to maintain relationship may aid in refocusing attention to working on achieving the identified characteristics. It is also necessary to give special attention to aspects that may inhibit a partner's ability to achieve a connected egalitarian relationship. For example, partners come from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds each with different possible ways to express care and meanings associated with care practices.

The issue of gendered power, in particular, continues to impact relationships between men and women. In fact, the self-in relationship model recognizes ways that issues of power and privilege may lead to disconnections within relationships (Jordan, 2009). Unfortunately, couples often get caught in unhealthy and unhelpful power struggles where the "fight to be right" may dominate the desire to be connected.

Power and the Connected Egalitarian Relationship

The concept of power can have several definitions depending upon the perspective one choses to take. In general, power involves the ability to have an affect or to produce change. Historically, researchers Cromwell and Olson (1975) defined family power in terms of the ability to influence others to achieve an outcome in the family, where one member may be able to block other members from an alternative outcome. Blood and Wolf (1960) looked at martial power in particular and identified it in terms of contribution of resources and the ability to make decisions within the marriage. The extent of power research is vast to say the least, however only recently have researchers

begun to examine power in terms of its continued impact on the ability to achieve genuine equality and connection within relationship (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009). Unfortunately, most definitions or explorations of power are deeply rooted in a Western perspective of "power-over" other. Where the person in power may oppose shared power because it can threaten the status quo.

The discourse of self, from a Western cultural perspective, is focused on autonomy, independence, separation, power, and competition (Fishbane, 2001). The concept of power can be evident in any examination of negotiation processes within relationships. Power is explored here on three levels, positional power, personal power, and relational power, all of which intertwine to impact how couples negotiate through achieving the connected egalitarian relationship. Historically, men have been dominate in maintaining positional power within society. Positional power involves the ability to exert influence in relationship to others based on status and access to and control of economic and other culturally valued resources (Fox and Blanton, 1994). Through decades of challenge, women have fought to gain an increased level of positional power within society and have succeeded in raising awareness as to how it impacts relationships. In terms of power within relationships, researchers have explored levels of power that focus on emotional resources such as connection, inclusion, nurturance, and cooperation (Konek 1994, Lips 1991). This notion of power takes into account how a need for connection, love, and bonding creates an avenue for one to gain power within a relationship. It involves the utilization of support, relational information, trust, attention, and love as valuable resources to gain influence.

Just as positional power has been primarily gendered as masculine, relational power has been culturally gendered as feminine (Blanton & Vandergriff-Avery, 2001). Fox and Blanton (1994) explored relational power in terms of the influence one person has over another based on the nature of their personal relationship and the individual's ability to exert authority through the context of the relationship. Though it is important to take into account the various forms of power present in all aspects, this particular definition is incomplete. Like positional power, relational power in these terms focuses not only on a gender divide but also on ways one person can have power "over" another whether it be through physical or emotional resources. A shift in looking at power in divided terms is necessary if a model of a connected egalitarian relationship is to develop.

The Contemporary Couples study rests on a definition of personal power that focuses on the ability of one person "to influence a relationship towards his or her own goals, interests, and well-being" (Knudson-Martin and Mahoney, 2009). Here the notion of power is taken a step further to focus on the ability of each partner's needs and concerns be heard and considered equally valid, so that decisions that impact the well-being of both partners can be made. Power is explored in ways that both partners can share influence, resources, and decision-making ability. This ideal creates an opportunity where partners need to look at how to negotiate needs, wants, and desires. It requires an environment of cooperation with, not over, a partner so that both can feel a sense of well being and shared power (Fishbane, 2011).

The Social Constructionist Framework

This study will utilize a Social Constructionist framework to uncover the specific interactions that help shape couple dynamics. A major focus of social constructionism is

to uncover the ways in which individuals and groups participate in the creation of their perceived social reality (Burr, 2005). It involves looking at the ways social phenomena are created, institutionalized, and made into tradition by humans (Gergen, 2009). Here, three theoretical assumptions are explored that provide a lens to examine concepts of gender patterns and the concept of a connected egalitarian relationship.

First, social constructionism suggests that our understanding, knowledge, and interpretations of the world are created within, and outcomes of, relationship (Gergen, 2009). Meaning and reality (values and beliefs) develop within interactions where partners can negotiate and create preferred realities (Anderson, 1997). Coontz (2006) suggests that more partners, both male and female, want a relationship that is equal and less focused on a division of gender expectations. Though partners may report that they want an egalitarian relationship, shifting deeply embedded gender beliefs and practices requires a heightened awareness and conscious effort to change traditional gender patterns. Often partners practice traditional gender patterns unconsciously and fail to recognize how these patterns continue to impact the ability to create a connected egalitarian relationship. Many times, it is not until conflict arises that couples are faced with the challenge of working through or negotiating undesired patterns of gender, power differentials, and inequality.

It is through the negotiation process that partners can begin to challenge taken-for granted assumptions of traditional gender patterns. The process of negotiation can not only provide an opportunity to challenge concepts of power and gender patterns within marriage by partners voicing concerns, thoughts, and emotions, but an opportunity to become more aware of the dynamics that impact the development of a connected

egalitarian relationship. In this, the contemporary couple faces the challenge of creating a model of relationship that encompasses desired notions of equality and connection.

Second, social constructionism recognizes that new concepts emerge from traditional discourse and that examination of our taken-for-granted knowledge is fundamental to our future well being (Gergen, 2009). Concepts such as traditional gender patterns and power differentials are often overlooked within everyday relationships because of long-standing beliefs about the way "things are supposed" to be. The concept of gender, for example, is so taken-for-granted in our society that many believe it is bred into our genes (Lorber, 1994). Social constructionist theory challenges these assumptions to highlight how, through processes of teaching, learning, emulation, and enforcement, concepts such as gender, power, and equality evolve within interactions. In fact, the social evolution of gender ideologies has moved away from traditional notions of gendered differences towards interactions that promote equality for both partners. Main stream authors, Meers and Stober (2009) write on ways working couples can "have it all" by partners working together to question and negotiate work, child-rearing, money, time together, and communication to get to a "50/50" egalitarian relationship.

Finally, social constructionism presumes that because concepts such as gender, power, and relationship are created within a relational social context, these concepts are fluid in their ability to evolve and be redefined. Based on this assumption, partners continually work to incorporate previous perceptions of gender patterns and newer ideas of couple equality. It is through the day-to-day interactions that patterns, beliefs, and rules are formed and reformed. From this lens the concepts martial negotiation and the notion of the connected egalitarian relationship will be explored.

The Co-Creation of the Connected Egalitarian Relationship

Generally, one might view connection in terms of a bond or union between persons. The word evokes ideals of mutual care, trust, affection, shared meanings, verbal and non-verbal exchanges, and intimate interactions. Due to its complex nature, the concept of connection can involve a variety of meanings and can be uniquely defined by the partners who experience it. For the purposes of this study the term connection is used rather than intimacy to avoid comparison with the body of literature that may focus on connection in terms of sexuality or intimate exchanges in particular. Here, the concept of connection takes on a meaning that involves, what Lerner (2001) identifies as a deep longing *to be known* by other; where genuine emotional connection grows and evolves when partners take responsibility for what they each contribute to the relationship. Challenges occur when one partner is giving attention to the attempts at connection and the other is not as involved. Generally, the partner with less power is giving attention. Where the partner with more power inherently may or may not recognize the power they possess to define what is or what is not attended to (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009).

The level of connection between partners' fluctuates across the course of the relationship. It is common that early in the life of the relationship a variety of exchanges are displayed to communicate care, love, appreciation, affection and trust. As time goes on, many couples often report that these interactions, gestures, or exchanges become less and less making it more difficult to easily recognize the same level of connection present within the relationship. Every relationship is an evolving entity that is uniquely defined by the partners creating it. Partners may identify a multitude of factors that impact the sustained level of connection experienced throughout the course of the relationship, such

as family and work demands, but it is challenging to understand the specific reasons for loss of connection.

Negotiating the Connected Egalitarian Relationship

It may be easy to assume these days that there is equality between men and women. If one simply takes a look at the current state of education or employment he might argue that women "have it just as well as men do." Though it may be true that many women today have achieved an increased level of social and political opportunities, the level of equality within the domestic and relational spheres is far from equal.

The concept of marital equality is derived from the Contemporary Couples Study (Knudson-Martin, 2009) that focuses on promoting equal status and well being of each partner and encourages each partner to attend to and accommodate the other. This definition differs from traditional definitions of equality in the sense that it highlights the demonstration of equal attunement, accommodation, and attention between partners rather than focusing primarily on equally shared house work and child-rearing practices.

The model of the connected egalitarian relationship evolves out of the definition of marital equality taken here. It suggests that partners desire a state of relationship where they each have the ability to be heard, cared for, supported, and maintain an equal level of influence over decision-making processes. Historically, research on egalitarian models of marriage focused primarily on equally shared decision-making and/or contribution of domestic responsibilities but not on equally shared attention to the overall relationship and well being of each partner. From this perspective, issues within the relationship are

continually negotiated and worked through to better achieve a level of relational connection that the couple desires.

The concept of negotiation involves the process of bringing about a discussion of issues and arranging a settlement that is satisfactory to the parties involved. The concept of marital negotiation implies interactions of bargaining, verbal and non-verbal transactions, and interpretations of meaning take place so that partners can manage or move through challenges (Rubin, 1983). An assumption is made that within the marital dyad, partners are in a recurrent negotiation process as they live within their relationship and make day-to-day decisions. This process occurs both on a conscious and unconscious level by which daily interactions bring about change (Björnberg & Kollind, 2005). This definition of marital negotiation is firmly embedded in a social constructionist perspective that highlights change as a result of interactions. Negotiation occurs between partners during the everyday interactions of daily life. A challenge is that quite often negotiation processes are exchanged without much awareness. It may be likely that implicit exchanges, rather than attention to conscious efforts, make it difficult for couples to focus on the development of a connected egalitarian relationship.

Summary

This study utilizes both feminist and social constructionist frameworks to set the conceptual stage for understanding how couples may work together to co-create a connected egalitarian relationship (Weingarten, 1991). The feminist perspective derived from The Stone Center's work on connection shows us how partners seek mutual care, closeness, and growth (Jordan, 2009). This perspective also supports the research that

shows when partners are mutually attentive to each other both emotional and physical well being is increased (Fishbane, 2007, 2011).

Here, social constructionist theory is utilized to explore the various negotiation processes that occur between partners as they manage their day-to-day interactions (Gergen, 2009). The American contemporary couple continues to face many challenges. Though couples continue to struggle with marital equality in terms to shared domestic work and child-care, a more fundamental crisis is occurring. Couples are lacking a model of relationship that promotes the equal participation in and value of a connected relationship. The research presented will demonstrate how a limited view of equality and lack of research regarding marital negotiation practices inhibits our current understanding of the association between equality and connectedness.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

In an attempt to gain understanding of the negotiation processes couples face as they work towards a connected egalitarian relationship it is crucial to examine previous literature that examines traditional gender patterns, issues of power, and attempts at understanding negotiation processes that promote the ideal of the connected egalitarian relationship. Family researchers are on a continual quest to discover and gain better understanding of the challenges that the contemporary marriage faces. One consistent theme across time appears to be that the state of marriage is in a pivotal shift away from traditional gender ideologies towards a more egalitarian form of partner interaction (Amato, Johnson, Booth, & Rogers 2003, Gerson, 2010). Recent research also demonstrates that couples seek an egalitarian relationship in which both partners feel connected, loved and cared for (Coontz, 2006). However, the contemporary couple continues to be plagued by challenges such as embedded beliefs that follow traditional gender ideologies and the lack of a model of relationship that promotes equality in terms of mutually shared connectedness.

This review will begin with a look at the ways couples continue to operate out of traditional gender ideologies and identify the challenges associated when studying marital equality. It will demonstrate the limitations of the current literature on marital equality and couple connection. It will attempt to critique the narrow view many researchers take when studying marital equality. For example, research is generally limited in examining the concepts of martial equality, power in relationships, and partner connection in relation to one another. Next, the review will provide justification for the need to conduct

research and develop theory that attempts to uncover relational processes that combine the concepts of marital equality and connection for couples at different stages of marriage.

Research regarding the impact of power within marriage will be offered to highlight the challenges partners face as they negotiate the development of a connected egalitarian relationship. Finally, an exploration regarding the limited amount of research conducted within the field of marriage of family therapy regarding actual negotiation processes is provided to support the need for this particular study.

The Legacy of Traditional Gender Ideologies

In many ways traditional gender ideologies continue to dominate the interactions between married couples. For example, women experience a decline in marital equality with the birth of children, as they generally become the primary caretakers (Steil, 1997). In fact, the research on marital equality continues to highlight that women continue to contribute more to household tasks and parenting regardless of the amount of hours they work, level of pay achieved, or belief in gender ideology (Coltrane, 2000a; Mannino & Deutsch, 2007). Ickes (1993) nicely laid out the challenges men and women face as they enter relationship as he describes the "fundamental paradox." He writes,

> "…in this period of changing gender role expectations… on one hand, we are disposed by both our biological and past cultural heritage to be attracted to the same gender role stereotyped traits and characteristics that our ancestors found attractive in members of the opposite sex. On the other hand, to the extent that we embrace contemporary ideals of gender equality; we are likely to react negatively to the asymmetrical power relations and miscommunications that result when men view the world through the lens of power and status and women view the world through the lens of closeness and solidarity (p. 82-83)."

Consequently, men and women continue to operate within relationship with unclear expectations and unmet relational needs. Parenthood requires shifts in roles and expectations among partners. The addition of children in the family may compound and exacerbate the inequities that may exist in the marriage as the demands for time, attention, and care increase (Cowan & Cowan, 1992). Though research has begun to pave the way to scrutinize issues of equality in terms of shared housework, decision-making, and parenting, it is limited in studies that examine how couples can achieve mutually shared connection.

Research on Marital Equality

Researchers continue to struggle with a clear definition or examination of marital equality (Harris, 2009). Since there are multiple ways to look at equality it can make it difficult to identify the specific aspects to achieve it. Historical research on marital equality has defined equality in terms of shared household duties, child-care, finances, and decision-making between partners (Schwartz, 1994; Rosenbluth, Steil & Whitcomb, 1998; Björnberg & Kollind, 2005). While others define equality in terms of equal earning power and a need to balance independence and dependence (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Kollock, Blumstein, & Schwartz, 1994).

Much of the literature narrowly focuses on “work” in terms of shared domestic tasks. The concept of marital equality is in fact complex; in that involves a variety of interactional processes shared between partners including but not limited to, the division of responsibilities, family caretaking, emotion work, mutual respect, and attunement practices. Results suggest that though ideals of equality between partners remain

consistent, women continue to provide the greater proportion of household work and child-care despite an increase in paid employment (Björnberg & Kollind, 2005; Garey & Hansen, 2011). Sullivan (2006) speaks to the "slow dripping of change" occurring where dominant attitudes about marital equality are shifting but actual practices and social policies have not caught up to the ideals. Though the research demonstrates significant shifts in gendered beliefs about the amount of shared work and child rearing in marriage, it is limited in scope.

In her groundbreaking work, Hochschild (1989, 2003) paved the way for viewing "work" in relationships in terms of emotional exchange. As a result she identified the notion of "emotion work" to highlight the significance of the management of emotions within the private context of relationships. The research was significant in that it focused on how partners felt about family life in terms of gender ideologies, perceived fairness, and mutual appreciation. Though Hochschild's work shed light on how macro social shifts are impacting micro level couple interactions, it did not specifically examine how couples manage to maintain connection throughout time and within the confines of traditional gender ideologies. Ultimately, it begged for researchers to continue to uncover, examine, and challenge, the "stalled revolution" where men and women struggle with tensions of out dated gender scripts and desires for connectedness.

This study aims to tie the concepts of marital equality and connectedness by identifying a more relational definition of marital equality which focuses on mutuality shared between partners where each holds equal status, mutual accommodation, attention, and well-being of each partner (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney 1996). Regrettably, there is currently limited research regarding marital equality in terms of shared mutuality and

connection, especially in the field of marriage and family therapy (Jonathan & Knudson-Martin, 2012). Jonathan & Knudson-Martin (2012) examined how couples employ methods of attunement in their relationships and how attunement is related to gender equality. They found that when couples made conscious decisions to be connected, marital equality became possible. This study was significant for two reasons. First, there was a consensus among couples that they all wanted to experience a sense of connection within their relationship. Second, it highlighted the idea that traditional gendered power interferes with the level of attunement partners experience within their relationship. These findings provide justification for the proposed study by highlighting the value of exploring negotiated couple interactions; the desire to maintain connection and the challenges couples face as a result of traditional gender scripts.

Huenergardt & Knudson-Martin (2009) address seven goals therapists can use in treatment to shift power differentials so that couples can experience a mutually supportive relationship. Knudson-Martin & Huenergardt (2010) introduce the Socio-Emotional Relationship Therapy (SERT) approach to look at "socio-cultural processes that limit couples' ability to develop mutually supportive relationships." Here they highlight four necessary conditions for the foundation of mutual support including mutual influence, shared vulnerability, shared relationship responsibility, and mutual attunement. These studies taken together demonstrate the desire and possibility for couples to achieve a connected egalitarian relationship. The stage is set in regards to beliefs about equality and the desire for partners to be connected. The challenge occurs when partners attempt to put these beliefs and desires into practice.

Between Expectations and Practice

Previous studies indicate a significant difference in the ideal of equality and the practice of it in marital relationships (Blaisure & Allen, 1995). A consistent theme throughout the literature is that couples, despite continued efforts to shift towards a more egalitarian model of relationship, continue to interact in ways that reinforce traditional gender patterns (Gerson, 2010). Gerson interviewed 120 men and women between ages 18-32 to examine processes of stability and change, uncover critical turning points, discover the social contexts and events triggering changes. She sought to gain better understanding of the social revolution impacting the relational lives of men and women today. What she found is that the majority of men and women view an egalitarian balance as the ideal within a committed relationship but that few are able to achieve it. The study highlights the social and economic factors, such as ridged career expectations, that continue impact a couple's ability to achieve equality.

Sociologists, Bittman and Pixley (1997) discuss the concept of pseudomutuality, in that partners describe their relationship in egalitarian terms while still interacting with ridged gender roles. Rosenbluth, Steil & Whitcomb (1998) when exploring martial equality in terms of attitudes, task division, reciprocity, decision-making and economic resources found that men and women use feelings and attitudes such as mutual respect, supportiveness, commitment, and reciprocity over time, created the perception of equality. Yet, fewer than 28% of respondents were in relationships where homemaking tasks and careers were equally shared and valued. These studies, and others, speak to the difficulties couples face when they attempt to practice equality in terms of shared work

and may also shed light on the challenges couples may face when trying to achieve mutual connection.

Knudson-Martin and Mahoney (1998) found that despite an embedded belief in egalitarian ideals from both men and women, wives were more likely than husbands to accommodate and attend to their partner's desires and emotional needs. The researchers concluded that couples established a "myth of equality"; whereby unequal behaviors were rationalized by the use of "equality talk". This research highlights several things. First, couples are consistent in their commitment towards the goal or equality. Second, traditional gender ideology remains present in efforts to achieve equality. Finally, that couples lack a guideline by which they can achieve the connected egalitarian relationship they desire. Thus, making the role of the marriage and family therapist pivotal as couples seek assistance to repair relational damage. Mahoney & Knudson-Martin (2000) suggest that outdated gender scripts continue haunt the ability of the contemporary couple from achieving marital equality for several reasons. First, "old scripts are built into the fabric of our lives…they keep in place the ideas that women should seek relationship and connection and men should protect their independence and maintain control." (p. 3) Second, social institutions and cultural norms lag behind new ideals. Finally, when faced without a clear model of ways to achieve equality, couples fall back to familiar traditional gender scripts; an outdated model that carries with it power differentials that impair couples ability to maintain intimate connection.

Power and the Impact of Negotiating a Connected Egalitarian Relationship

Power is an inevitable concept in any relationship as partners seek to have personal and emotional needs met via, often limited, resources. “The greatest enemy of an equal relationship is the desire for power and superiority” (Tuites & Tuites, 1986, p. 191). The challenge is that power dynamics within the marital dyad are complex, unspoken, and often practiced without specific awareness of presence to the point that it remains underestimated and taken for granted (Komter, 1989; Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009). To ignore the impact of power not only perpetuates the gender divide but it has the potential to prevent the development of genuine equality and connection within relationships (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 1999).

An examination of partner negotiation processes cannot be clearly understood if dynamics of power are not taken into consideration (Carter & Peters, 1996). One’s ability to negotiate any change is inherently dependent upon the level, type, and execution of power one has (Fisher, 1983a). A growing body of research shows that earning more than one’s husband does not increase the ability to negotiate but it can actually diminish a woman’s power within the home (Brines, 1994; Bittman, England, Folbre, Sayer, & Matheson, 2003; Dema-Moreno, 2006; Greenstein, 2000). Tichenor (2005) found that “men who earn substantially less than their wives continue to be defined as providers and exercise a great deal of power and authority, the power to make decisions, exact real and symbolic deference, and define the marital contract (p. 192).” A critique of the research on marital power is the fact that many studies focus on the balance of power in terms of shared labor, decision-making, and financial power but little has been focused

specifically on the impact of power on the ability of partners to connect to one another equally. Instead, past research has focused on the association of marital power and low levels of marital satisfaction based on negative behavior exchange (Kolb & Straus, 1974; Whisman & Jacobson, 1990).

Positional Power vs. Relational Empowerment

Blanton & Vandergriff-Avery (2001) examine both positional power and relational power within marriage. “Positional power is the capacity to exert influence in relationship to others based on status and access to and control of economic and other culturally valued resources” (p. 298). Positional power has been culturally gendered as masculine and relational power has been culturally gendered as feminine. Fox and Blanton (1995) define relational power, as the influence one person has over another, based on the nature of their personal relationship and the individual’s ability to exert authority through the context of the relationship.

A marital power paradox is created as men continue to feel powerless within a relational context, though powerful in a social context (Blanton & Vandergriff, 2001). In terms of power women are gaining in regards to positional power yet men are lagging behind in gaining relational power. Both gendered concepts of power are played out within the relational context of marriage and impact the ability for couples to negotiate a connected egalitarian relationship (Fishbane, 2011). This dichotomous view of power perpetuates a notion of “power over” the other, which inevitably creates “win/lose” situations; where neither partners’ needs, expectations, or desires have the full potential to be heard or validated. The “power over” perspective also lends inattention to the value

of emotional exchange between partners. As partners attempt negotiation, either explicitly or implicitly, the potential for emotional reactivity is heightened. When partners are attempting to get needs met, power is a taken-for granted force that is present within every interactional exchange. Thus, the concept of power within relationships is indeed complex, but it cannot be ignored.

Ultimately, the concept of power is a fundamental one in all relationships. It can however be used as a catalysis for relational growth if viewed and utilized in a way that promotes “power with” instead of “power over.” The “power over” model only limits partners and perpetuates a relational divide. What might change if power was not viewed in terms of what one does or does not have, but instead viewed in terms of mutual empowerment?

A movement towards egalitarian processes is possible when partners engage in relational empowerment practices that foster a mutually respectful relationship (Fishbane, 2011). These processes involve a combination of taking responsibility for one’s values, thoughts, feelings, and learning to express needs and expectations (Fishbane, 2011; Lerner, 2001). This notion can be difficult for some as both men and women struggle with outdated gender scripts, previous painful experiences, and the inability to manage uncomfortable situations and/or emotions (Lerner, 2001). Though it may difficult, there are couples that are able to engage in successful mutual negotiation processes throughout the course of their relationships. This study seeks to gain understanding into these negotiation processes.

Marital Negotiation

Multiple authors suggest the need for couples to pay special attention to the required negotiation processes that are required to participate in and egalitarian relationship (Azar, 1995, Whitney, 1986; Bradley, 2009) However, there is also limited research on the processes of negotiation towards gaining not only an egalitarian relationship but one that also promotes equally shared connection. Again, research on negotiation practices has a tendency to focus on how couples manage the division of domestic work, child-care, and finances (Wiesmann, 2010). Or at the very least, not specifically conducted in the field of marriage and family therapy.

Unfortunately, much of the negotiation research has been conducted in the business arena and the divorce mediation arena and not in family research. In fact, Whitney (1986) utilized principles from business management to author the book *Win-Win Negotiations for Couples*. In it she offers a multitude of significant questions for partners to ask one another when faced with a variety of challenging topics from finances, to deciding to have a baby, and even negotiating sex. Though the suggestions may be helpful in many ways, the author overlooks significant challenges that are inherent in couples' relationships. Several assumptions are made throughout. First, it assumes each partner is on a similar level of differentiation to set aside emotions to logically, openly, and successfully discuss each topic. Next, it implies that each partner maintains an equal level of power within the relationship to voice concerns, be heard and validated, and able to have needs met. Finally, it is written from a Western, American, Anglo perspective. It does not take in to consideration, culture, religion, power dynamics, or other factors that impact partner's ability to effectively negotiate.

When research examines only issues such as shared domestic work, decision-making, and child-care, it overlooks critical aspects about what keeps a man and woman in a union of marriage over time. As women and men have gained an increase of financial independence tasks such as housework and child-care can be outsourced (Hochschild, 1989; Hochschild & Machung, 2003). Though it may not be identified as the ideal, outsourcing has the potential to reduce the level of tension within the home and/or relationship. However, equal attention to the emotional well being of the couple relationship is not a task that can be outsourced. Partners are still faced with the challenge of negotiating how care and connectedness is attended to within the relationship.

Sadly, it has been found that partners often avoid explicit negotiation practices to maintain the stability of the relationship (Benjamin, 1998, 2003). Attempts at negotiation may be met with conflict, avoidance, undesired outcomes, and/or emotional disconnect (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Scanzoni & Polonko, 1980). What develops is a tendency to avoid emotionally charged issues but at the cost of relational well being. Couples not only lack a model of what a connected egalitarian relationship looks like, but they are often ill equipped to engage in effective negotiation processes that promote the development of their desired relationship.

Summary

The limitation of literature regarding the association between equality, power, and connection leaves us with limited understanding about how contemporary couples are managing the development and maintenance of shared connection within their relationships. The literature on marital equality highlights the ambivalence and contradiction couples often experience as they attempt to implement egalitarian practices.

Stocks, Diaz, and Halleröd (2007) state, “Men do not always want the responsibility of being the main breadwinner but would like the advantages that the role could bring. Women resent economic dependence at the same time they value the husband as the breadwinner” (p. 152). It is this type of contradiction that may leave partners not only challenged in developing a sense of equality within their marriage, but also torn in and of them selves when attempting to practice the beliefs’ they each hold.

Several factors influence the development of marital equality. First, the negotiation of equality demands continual and consistent efforts. It is common that partners may not necessarily agree or share the same meaning of what equality looks like. Second, the inherent impact of power within relationships is often overlooked and/or taken-for-granted. Most power dynamics are enacted beyond the awareness of partners. Finally, without a clear model of what an egalitarian relationship looks like, couples tend to fall back to more familiar gender roles. At times it may appear simpler for partners to avoid conflict and take on traditional gender tasks, often unaware of the reinforcement of marital inequality (Björnberg & Kollind, 2005).

Couples face a daunting challenge before them. Negotiating everyday interactions takes time, effort, and consistent commitment. Each couple manages these interactions in a multitude of ways. The goal of this study is to uncover processes that may promote the development of a mutually connected relationship. It may add to the body of literature by shedding light on crucial couple interactions that create lasting relationships over time.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODS

By gaining a better understanding of the ways contemporary couples manage the tension between traditional gender ideologies and the desire for a connected egalitarian relationship clinicians can increase the opportunity to help couples achieve the desired relationship they want. For this study a qualitative grounded theory methodology will be utilized. A qualitative research method is appropriate for this study because it enables researchers to develop rich descriptions, explore meanings, and gain better understanding into the realities of people's lives (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011).

This chapter will first address the assumptions of the researcher because these cannot be removed from the data (Charmaz, 2006). Second, a discussion regarding the grounded theory methodology is provided as well as details about this study's research questions, participants, interviews, and issues of reliability and validity. Next, a description regarding the specific methods utilized for data analysis is provided. Finally, a section on the study's implications and limitations is explored to acknowledge what may or may not be gained as a result of this particular study.

Researcher Assumptions

A unique aspect of qualitative research is the notion that the researcher's assumptions cannot be separate from the data (Charmaz, 2006). The researcher is immersed and present throughout each aspect of the research. From the inception of the questions, through the coding of the data, to the delivery of the results, the researcher and

her assumptions are present (Holliday, 2007). As a researcher I recognize that it is my responsibility to acknowledge my biases, assumptions, and personal characteristic's.

I am a thirty something, female, marriage and family therapist born within generation Y, where "why oh why?" is the operative question (Coates, 2007). Coates suggests that common characteristics of my generation include a driven can-do attitude, technologically astute, multi-tasking, activist, and egalitarian population. I, like many of my gen Y cohorts, was raised in an era where not only was the traditional construction of the family shifting radically through parental divorce or separation, but the messages about male/female roles seemed quite confusing. Why did my mother consistently tell me to stay in school and be "more than" her? Why did my parents raise me to believe that my female voice, my opinion, my ideas, and my wants are important but demonstrate a relationship where my mom did not have the same luxury?

I am the eldest daughter of five children raised in a bi-cultural, Hispanic and Asian, two-parent household. I always considered myself lucky that my parents remained together while I witnessed my friends experiencing the challenges of divorce and single parent households. This is not to say that things were simple by any means. I recognize now that my parents did their best with the means they had, but I remember being a teenager filled with anger and confusion regarding the consistent mixed messages I received. I was taught that girls are just as good as boys, that we should be treated equal in school, at play, and in life. However, a wife tends to the needs and wants of her husband, as his needs take precedent. Now these messages were not stated overtly, in most instances, but they were consistently demonstrated in the daily interactions within the family. Messages from various females in the family reinforced contradictory

messages about what I was able to accomplish for my self, while somehow covertly limiting the actual attainability based on my decision to marry.

Fast forward decades later as I find myself highly educated, married, and faced with the complicated choice to further my career, become a mother, and/or attempt to "have it all" while continually working on ways my husband and I can negotiate a sense of remaining connected and equal. My feminist and social constructionists theoretical lens' have shaped and directed my quest to gain better understanding of the challenges facing the contemporary marriage. I see, work with, and listen to others as they share their life stories and ask similar questions about living in a time where the quest for a connected egalitarian relationship is halted by reminiscent gender scripts of the past. I seek to understand how couples are managing these issues within their cultural and societal contexts. Based on the marital therapy I provide I make the assumption that partners genuinely want to feel cared for and connected to each other. Sadly, they often are unaware of the societal messages about male driven power that are present in their day-to-day interactions.

It is with this knowledge I take on the challenge to delve into the lived experiences of those who participated in the Contemporary Couples Study (CCS). I recognize that as a researcher I am a part of the social world that I seek to understand and it is due to this reflexivity that I must be conscious to clearly detail the methodology utilized in this study (Daly, 2007). There is recognition that in qualitative research observations are not purely objective, instead they are socially situated between the researcher and the participants (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008).

The Contemporary Couples Study

Earlier in my doctoral program in Marriage and Family Therapy at Loma Linda University I had an opportunity to participate in an ongoing study called the Contemporary Couples Study (CCS) lead by Dr. Carmen Knudson-Martin. The primary goal of the study is to gain better understanding of the real-life experiences of contemporary couples. Data collected involves a collection of stories that provide the lived experiences about how couples think about their relationships and how they are managing their lives together. Doctoral students were invited to participate in data collection and evaluation. Several students, including me, became intrigued with the possibility of uncovering relational dynamics that continue to impact the level of equality couples are able to achieve. As a result, each student was able to develop and refine specific areas within the study to examine. My specific interest revolves around understanding the negotiation processes that occur as couples manage the tension between traditional gender ideologies and the desire for a connected egalitarian relationship over time.

Research Questions

The central research question is how do couples negotiate the tension between traditional gender ideologies and the desire for a connected egalitarian relationship over time? Sub-questions include; 1) What are the processes by which couples are co-creating a model of a connected egalitarian relationship?, 2) To what extent do traditional gender ideologies continue to be a part of couples interactions and how do these beliefs & practices relate to couples goals of equality and connection?, and 3) How do issues of power impact the negotiation process?

This study will use a qualitative grounded theory approach to gain rich descriptions of the lived experiences of the couples interviewed. What follows is a brief description of the grounded theory methodology and how this approach is ideal for gaining understanding of the research questions. In addition, detailed information regarding participants, data collection methods, and data analysis is provided.

Qualitative Grounded Theory Methodology

Grounded theory methodology offers systemic and flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data where the primary goal is to develop theory (Charmaz, 2006; Daly, 2007). At the core, grounded theory seeks to understand the lived experiences of people and make statements about how their described patterns of interactions construct reality (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). It is ideal for studying the complex nature of issues such as partner connection and equality because not all people define and express these concepts in the same manner. By attaining the rich stories of couples and fleshing out their personal meanings through data analysis, this study hopes to gain a deeper understanding of the actual lived negotiation practices couples utilize over time. A qualitative research design is best used here because it can allow this researcher to discover the inner meanings of experience from participants.

Corbin and Strauss' (2008) post-positivist paradigm is used in this study for its attention to structured detail, clear boundaries, and aim in discovering explanations about symbolic meanings. Grounded theory outlines three specific methodological stages, data collection and coding, theoretical sampling, and redefining theory. Here, the researcher engages in an interactive reflexive process with the research data with the aim of generating theory (Hall & Callery, 2001). The developed theory itself must emerge from

within the data. For example, theory regarding specific negotiation processes would develop as a result of the shared stories the couples describe rather than preconceived ideas of negotiation.

Although it is ideal that data collection and analysis occur simultaneously in grounded theory research, this study will utilize interviews previously collected as part of the larger Contemporary Couples Study (CCS), which was collected by multiple interviewers throughout approximately 7 years. Thus, data collection and coding will not be done simultaneously. Though I was able to participate in some of these interviews, other researchers have collected most of the interviews. As a result, I will not be able to personally observe all of the cues, such as facial expressions, change in tone, or shifts in emotions, that partners may express when describing their experiences or ask the kinds of follow-up questions most relevant to this analysis. An advantage is that I will have access to the ways couples describe their relationship processes from their own perspective and not shaped by this researchers sense of a tension between equality and connection. Moreover, I will be following the cyclical analytic process characteristic of a grounded theory method and return to the interviews again and again to see them anew as coding and theory development proceed.

Data Collection

Due to the longevity of the CCS, I have access to approximately 70 previously collected interviews of couples. Since this particular study is interested in negotiation processes over time, it is a strength that two separate and distinct sample sets have been collected over a seven-year period as the criteria regarding length of time in the relationship is different for each sample set. Approximately half of the interviews consist

of a sample set that includes couples in a committed relationship with children 5 or younger. The second half of interviews is with couples in a committed relationship of 10 years or more with the oldest child 6 to 16 years old. Though the study is not longitudinal, it will be helpful to gather rich descriptions of couples' experiences at different stages of partner and family development. This is likely to assist in gaining a better understanding of how partners are managing the issues of equality and connection throughout the development of their relationships.

The interviewers for the CCS consisted of doctoral level students. The interviewers were provided with a specific interview guide and trained on ways to consistently interview couples and ask probing questions that may lead to richer detail of experiences. Couples were informed of the purpose of the study and asked questions revolving around the areas of decision-making, conflict resolution, and overall relational ideology. See Appendix I for the complete Interview Guide used in the Contemporary Couples Study. For the purposes of the current study, questions surrounding conflict resolution, decision-making, and emotion work are of particular interest in understanding negotiation processes. Interviews were semi-structured and lasted approximately 1 to 2 hours in length. Interviews were taped and then later transcribed.

Couples who participated in the CCS were selected by snowball sampling. When researchers conducted their initial interviews they asked couples for referrals of other couples who fit criteria and may be interested in participating in the study. The couples in this study consist of non-clinical participants, meaning that they were not drawn from persons participating in therapy. Participants were informed of the intent of the study,

provided informed consent, and asked if they would available for re-contact at a later date.

Sample Description

As stated previously, two different sample sets will be used for this study each with separate criteria. Both sample sets contain diverse populations including Caucasian, African-American, Hispanic, and Asian men and women. Participants consisted of a variety of occupations, ages, education ranges, and religious standings.

The criterion for each sample set is as follows. The first sample includes couples in committed relationships with young children under 5 years old. The second sample set includes couples in committed relationships of 10 years or more with the oldest child ages 6 to 16. Both samples sets are of particular interest to this study due to the different challenges the couples may face at different developmental periods of their relationships. For example, couples with small children may identify specific negotiation practices based on the level of involvement needed to care for younger children. While couples that have older children may experience a different negotiation practices because their children may be less dependent on parental caretaking.

Analysis

In the grounded theory methodology there is an understanding that researcher herself is very much a part of data analysis outcomes. Here, analysis is a reflexive and structured process where the researchers' insight and ability to reconstruct meaning from the rich stories of the participants is crucial to the development of grounded theory

(Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2008). The researcher's ability to follow the structured nature of data analysis and her personal transparency throughout the process, aids in maintaining credibility and trustworthiness of the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Analysis of the data will involve a series of specified coding procedures. Each step in the coding process, open, axial, and selective, involves detailed attention to key terms and phrases provided by the participants. The researcher "combs" the data to identify reoccurring themes, which evolve into specific categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Saturation occurs when no new themes and/or categories can be derived from the data. For example, while "combing" the data about how couples negotiate connection I may come across the phrase " I give her the look like, you know, it's time to put the kids to bed" or "Sometimes it's the little things, like a wink or glance, small things that let me knows he still cares." These statements may be coded with the theme of non-verbal language to connection.

Coding

As mentioned, grounded theory methodology involves three specified stages of coding data, open, axial, and selective coding. During each phase there is recognition that As the researcher, I am part of a reflexive process with the data. I must be aware of and take note of my personal thoughts and processes as I take apart and reconstruct the data to formulate grounded theory. This self-reflective process will be documented throughout using memos. What follows is description and examples of each stage of the coding process.

Open Coding

In open coding I will read each interview line-by-line to deconstruct the data into pieces of information. I will use the information to identify and label main concepts, mark important sections, and add descriptive codes. For example, if a husband states, "After all, it's my job to take good care of my family, isn't it?" This line may be noted for words like, "my job" and "take care" which may evolve into a concept of " sense of responsibility." Here, the data is taken apart or "fractured" to aid in comparing and contrasting different concepts against one another (Maxwell, 2005). At this stage it is likely that both abstract and concrete concepts emerge which will help to develop clearer general categories (Silverman, 2004). Throughout the initial coding phase I will be sure to memo write my thoughts about the data and the process of identifying codes. Corbin and Strauss (2008) emphasize the importance of the researcher writing memos about thoughts, questions, and/or interesting points while reading transcriptions. These memos can be simple words, sentences, or even paragraphs. The idea is to generate effective memos that aid in developing stronger concepts and categories. Creating effective memos is completed throughout the analysis process. Corbin and Strauss (2008) highlight the fact that open coding and axial coding go "hand in hand" as they are not separate or distinct processes but instead build upon each other throughout analysis.

Axial Coding

The next step of coding data involves "fleshing out" major themes of the coded data. In axial coding the researcher links identified categories and subcategories to make connections. For example, I may identify themes such as "care of", "consideration for,"

and “commitment to.” These themes might possibly be linked together to form the category “couple connection.” Another example my involve themes of “We-talk” such as “we work it out,” “we find a way,” “we don’t let it build.” It may be identified through this categorization that couples use language to justify behaviors. Diligent axial coding helps the researcher to begin to see the data in terms of larger theoretical understandings. It is in this stage that I hope to map out and put together my interpretation of the processes occurring for the parties involved. My goal is to be able to accurately reflect the patterns of behavior present and formulate better understanding of couple negotiation processes in general.

Selective Coding

In qualitative research, the relationships between identified categories are continually verified by reexamining the data. In selective coding, I will gather the identified categories and attempt to pinpoint central “core” categories that accurately represent the primary phenomenon in the study (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). For example, in analyzing negotiation processes categories such as “ work it through,” “talking it over,” and “acknowledging a problem” may lead to a core category of “Explicit Negotiation.” Where as categories such as, “unspoken rules,” “partner should just know,” and “assumed understanding” may lead to the core category of “Implicit Negotiation.” At this stage of analysis the previously fractured data is reconfigured in terms of wider abstract concepts that can be generalized to explain the social phenomenon of the participants and achieve the goal of developing theory. What may be developed is an

understanding that it is critical to give value and attention to both spoken and unspoken processes when examining shared connection.

Saturation and Credibility

In reaching saturation there is a notion that the analysis of data produces no new themes and/or emergence of concepts. Straus and Corbin (2008) point out that saturation is a "matter of degree" where the concern is more with the addition of new data that does not contribute or add anything to the overall development of theory. In this study both the significant number of interviews conducted and the longevity of the Contemporary Couples Study have the potential to assist in adequately achieving desired saturation of concepts. As the researcher I will be cautious to not only be aware of when new concepts emerge but also how these concepts appropriately contribute to answering questions and the development of the emerging theory.

Maxwell (2005) suggests that it is crucial that the researcher not only utilize the strategies throughout the process of the study, but to also demonstrate how the actual application of the strategies lead to increasing trustworthiness of conclusions. This idea will remain constant as I make attempts to apply each of the stated strategies.

There is recognition that the way to assess the concept of "validity" or "trustworthiness" in qualitative research has, and continues to be, somewhat problematic (Flick, 2006). In qualitative research the idea of validity cannot simply be equated to "finding truth." Corbin and Strauss (2008) point out that though a main goal of any qualitative study is to accurately represent the phenomena being studied, the idea of absolute "truth" is unattainable. Instead, the trustworthiness of a study is produced

through a myriad of transparent strategies conducted throughout the study from start to finish (Golafshani, 2003; Shenton, 2004).

It appears that a consensus is the notion that credibility or trustworthiness can be increased through the use of a variety of strategies. For example, Silverman (2004) discusses the use of "constant comparison" and "searching for deviant cases" as a few useful strategies. In constant comparison I may develop a hypothesis that shared connection is a product of conscious efforts to show affection, love, and care. I may compare this hypothesis to one that suggests shared connection is often unconscious expressions of shared meaning, beliefs, and gestures. Though both hypotheses may be present and reflect "truths" they must be tested against the data to determine their validity and not my own preconceived ideals of connection. The method of "searching for deviant cases" follows the same vein.

In any study there will be cases in which findings will not fit the norm. Traditionally these "outliers" may be overlooked or discounted in demonstrating significant results. In qualitative researcher however, "deviant cases" have potential to suggest alternative theoretical outcomes and should be included in discussion (Silverman, 2004). It is important to note that all couples do not "fit" into simplistic categories; this is what makes family research exciting and challenging at the same time. I may uncover, for example, couples that may not "fit" in defined notions of egalitarian practices engage in negotiation practices that reduce tension and increase connection. I would want to be careful to not discount such a finding because they did not fit "ideal" notions of egalitarian exchange. Instead, such a finding could help to highlight unique

characteristics that "work" for partners or may be seen as strengths within couple interactions.

Additional methods to increase the level of credibility within this study may revolve around use of "rich" data and researcher transparency. Maxwell (2005) suggests that increased validity begins at the onset of data collection; where attaining rich data in interviews that are detailed, intensive, and varied in participant traits is ideal. Strengths of this study are its use of numerous interviews with participants from a variety of ethnicities, ages, religious backgrounds, and differences in lengths of time within relationship. These may help to provide a variety of insights into differencing practices among a variety of couples. Interviews are also intensive in length and transcribed in their entirety, which may assist in bringing attention to significant partner nuances exchanged throughout the interview process.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, the credibility of a study includes not only the level of transparency of the analysis used but that of the researcher as well. I have stated previously my feminist – social constructionist lens and experience that guides my research interests. In this study I must be aware and cautious to avoid interjecting personal biases while developing codes, categories, and core concepts. I will make good use of memoing throughout the process and re-examine my initial impressions. It will also be helpful to utilize "investigator triangulation" by discussing my impressions with my dissertation committee members to understand the data from multiple perspectives.

Implications and Limitations

This study has the potential to achieve several significant contributions. First, the main goal is to develop a theoretical understanding of how couples manage tension

around traditional gender ideologies and the desire to have a connected egalitarian relationship. The contemporary couple faces an uphill battle in maintaining relationship in general yet alone one in which both partners can report a genuine sense that both connection and equality is consistently present. This study may contribute to heightened awareness of not only challenges but also contributions to egalitarian marital change. By exploring marital negotiation practices and developing useful theory, couples, researchers, and marriage and family therapists have an opportunity to understand what is and what is not helpful in negotiation practices. For example, I may uncover that conflict is a consequence of any negotiation process.

Traditionally "conflict" is viewed as bad, unwanted, and undesired. In fact, in a therapeutic setting, the reduction of conflict is one of the most requested goals of couple's therapy. This study has the potential to take a concept that may traditionally be viewed as unproductive and shift the perspective to view how it may be a necessary component of marital growth. Which leads to the second possible contribution of this study.

As mentioned, it is common for couples to ask Marriage and Family Therapists to assist them with reducing conflict within their relationships. In response to customer request many therapists utilize interventions such as conflict resolution training and the increase of effective communication skills. This study has the potential to highlight concepts that may assist therapists to view tension and negotiation practices in a different light. Change practices are not always convenient, desired, or "pretty." In fact, many would argue that true change comes with many costs. This study may also assist with highlighting the variety of costs needed to achieve the benefits of a desired relationship.

As in any study, this study is not without its limitations. Though the questions asked of the couples are well suited to uncover a variety of interactional processes surrounding shared practices such as household and emotion work, specific questions using language of negotiation processes were not asked. For example, couples were not asked, “how do you negotiate connection, equability, and or gender roles in your relationship.” Instead, the ideal of negotiation is more implied when asking the question, “how is the emotional work in the relationship divided” and “How would you determine if a relationship was fair to both partners?” Here, there is an assumption that the couples practice negotiation throughout multiple interactional processes.

Also, this particular study requires that couples be interviewed together. This methodology can be helpful to notice actual interactional processes in the moment. Such as how partners respond to one another during questioning and how they understand personal experience in the context of relationship. However, it may have been useful to interview partners independent of one another. This format may have brought about responses based on the sole perception of each partner individually. Sometimes partners may be reluctant to share a personal experience and/or perception due to relational repercussions at a latter time.

Finally, a considerable limitation is the fact that I did not conduct the majority of interviews myself. As a result, I am not able to give specific attention to the relational cues and nuances that may have been important to note during the interview process. Also, I am unable to conduct follow-up questions based on noted reactions. Overall this may be limiting in my ability to flesh out some processes that contribute to the overall phenomenon or experience of the couples.

Though limitations are inherent in any study, this particular study has the potential to contribute significantly to Marriage and Family Therapists, couples, and family researchers. So much uncertainty continues to exist in family research in understanding partner equality and negotiation practices. Couples today lack a roadmap for understanding and navigating through the ever-changing societal climate. I firmly believe that this may contribute to the increasing rates of marital dissatisfaction and dissolution. Studies such as the one proposed here may contribute to the body of knowledge that challenges the traditional gender practices that inhibit couples and move in a direction that promotes strengthening of couples.

CHAPTER FIVE

NEGOTIATING MARITAL CARE:

CO-CREATING THE CONNECTED EGALITARIAN RELATIONSHIP

By

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Abstract

Research suggests that couples seek connection and equality within the marital relationship, yet they continue to struggle due to the continued impact of traditional gender ideologies. This study used grounded theory methodology and feminist social constructionist framework to explore how traditional gender constructs impact couples' ability to attain connected egalitarianism. Analysis of 68 interviews with two sets of couples—parents of children 5 years old and younger and couples together at least 10 years with the oldest child aged 6-16—identified relational gender role ambiguity as a core dimension facing couples. They responded through four primary styles of relationship management: gendered disengagement, gendered reciprocity, relational disengagement, and relational reciprocity. Results indicate the need for both partners to engage in explicit relational practices that promote reciprocal emotional connection.

Negotiating Marital Care

Many heterosexual couples report that it is not enough to love each other but that they also want equality within their marriage (Gerson, 2010; Goudreau & Progress 2010). The challenge lies somewhere between not only how to achieve equality in marriage but to maintain connection over the life of the relationship. This study seeks to understand how couples negotiate between traditional gender ideologies and the desire for a connected egalitarian relationship; that is, a relationship where both partners are equally committed to the care and connection expressed within the relationship.

During each stage of the relationship couples need to negotiate a multitude of issues and inherent challenges, all while attempting to maintain connection (McGoldrick, Carter, Garcia-Preto, 2010). Quite often couples seek therapeutic intervention claiming that issues such as conflict over fairness, a break down in communication, and/or a lack of connection plague their relationship (Doss, Simpson, & Christensen, 2004). Issues such as these are often rooted in long-standing and deeply imbedded concepts of gender, power, equality, and connection playing out within the marital dyad (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009). Marriage and Family Therapists' face the challenge of assisting couples with finding effective ways to overcome these issues and develop the type of relationship they desire (Johnson, 2005; Knudson-Martin & Huenergardt, 2010).

Though the idea that men and women should achieve equality in their relationships is prevalent, studies demonstrate that while couples talk about their marriage in terms of equality the actual practice of equality is still limited (Hochschild & Machung, 2003; Hurst, 2005; Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009). Thus, the purpose of

this grounded theory study is to examine the relational processes couples utilize as they attempt to co-create a connected egalitarian relationship over the long-term.

The Co-Creation of the Connected Egalitarian Relationship

Our analysis of couple processes draws on a feminist perspective derived from the Stone Center's work on how intimate partners seek mutual care, closeness, and growth (Jordan, 2009). We use Social Constructionist theory to highlight the interactional processes and taken-for granted traditional gender assumptions that occur between partners as they negotiate their relationship (Gergen, 2009; Weingarten, 1991).

According to the Stone Center's self-in relationship model, people yearn to be connected to others. Thus, marital connection is defined as an active process between both partners that promotes mutuality in regards to empowerment, empathy, respect, authenticity, and safety (Miller, 1988; Miller & Stiver, 1997). Partners who demonstrate a commitment to the overall welfare of the relationship and reciprocal attention to each other's thoughts, feelings, and needs would be identified as participating in a connected egalitarian relationship (see also, Silverstein, Buxbaum, Tuttle, Knudson-Martin, & Huenergardt, 2006). The self-in relationship model also recognizes ways that issues of power and privilege may lead to disconnections within relationships (Jordan, 2009).

Power and the Connected Egalitarian Relationship

The Contemporary Couples Study originally drew on a definition of personal power that focuses on the ability of one person "to influence a relationship towards his her own goals, interests, and well-being" (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009). Here the

notion of power is taken a step further to focus on the ability of each partner's needs and concerns be heard and considered equally valid. It requires an environment of cooperation with, not over, a partner so that both can feel a sense of well being and shared power (Fishbane, 2011).

Negotiating the Connected Egalitarian Relationship

It is through the negotiation process that partners can begin to challenge taken-for granted assumptions of traditional gender patterns in hopes of maintaining relational connection. Here, the concept of connection takes on a meaning that involves, what Lerner (2001) identifies as a deep longing *to be known* by other; where genuine emotional connection grows and evolves when partners take responsibility for what they each contribute to the relationship.

We assume that partners are in a recurrent negotiation process as they live within their relationship and make day-to-day decisions and relate to each other. This process occurs both on a conscious and unconscious level by which daily interactions bring about change (Björnberg & Kollind, 2005). A challenge is that quite often negotiation processes are exchanged without much awareness. Researchers have only begun to examine how the ways partners negotiate with each other impacts their ability to achieve genuine equality and connection (Jonathan & Knudson-Martin, 2012; Knudson-Martin, 2013).

Martial Equality and Negotiation in the Literature

Sullivan (2006) speaks to the "slow dripping of change" occurring where dominant attitudes about marital equality are shifting but actual practices and social policies have not caught up to the ideals; despite continued efforts to shift towards a more egalitarian model of relationship. Couples continue to interact in ways that reinforce traditional gender patterns (Gerson, 2010). In fact, the research on marital equality highlights that women continue to contribute more to household tasks and parenting regardless of the amount of hours they work, level of pay achieved, or belief in gender ideology (Björnberg & Kollind, 2005, Coltrane, 2000a; Garey & Hansen, 2011; Mannino & Deutsch, 2007). The addition of children in the family exacerbates the inequities that may exist in the marriage as the demands for time, attention, and care increase (Cowan & Cowan, 1992). Though research has scrutinized issues of equality in terms of shared housework, decision-making, and parenting, it is limited in studies that examine how couples can achieve mutually shared connection over time.

Research on Marital Power and Negotiation

Gendered power perpetuates a gender divide that limits the development of genuine equality and connection within relationships (Gottman, 2012; Knudson-Martin, 2013; Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 1999). One's ability to negotiate any change is inherently dependent upon the level, type, and execution of power one has (Fisher, 1983a). Historically, research on marital power focused on the balance of power in terms of shared labor, decision-making, and financial power (Kolb & Strauss, 1974; Whisman & Jacobson, 1990). More recent work has begun to explore relational sources and

implications of power (e.g. Fishbane, 2011; Gottman, 2012; Knudson-Martin, 2013; Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009)

As partners attempt to get their needs met, power is always present in their interactional exchanges (Gottman, 2012). How couples manage this power in light of changing gender norms is not clear. Fishbane (2011) suggests that couples need to learn to mutually engage in relational empowerment practices that support commitment to relationship rather than dominance over one another. This can be difficult as both men and women struggle with outdated gender scripts, previous painful experiences, and the inability to manage uncomfortable situations and/or emotions (Lerner, 2001). The current body of literature reveals little about how specific relational negotiation practices contribute to attaining an equal and connected relationship over time. By examining couples' reports of their day-to-day negotiation processes, this study identifies key relational management styles to uncover what is and is not working for couples as they navigate through ever changing gender role ideals.

Method

We used a qualitative grounded theory method because it enables researchers to develop rich descriptions, explore meanings, and gain better understanding into the realities of people's lives (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). The study utilized 68 interviews previously conducted as part of the Contemporary Couples Study (CCS) at Loma Linda University. The primary goal of the CCS is to gain a better understanding of how couples are managing changing gender ideals and expectations (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney,

2009). The current study focused on the management of marital connection processes over time, drawing on two distinct sample sets.

The first sample includes couples in committed relationships with young children under 5 years old. This sample set is identified throughout this study as short-term couples (ST). The second sample set includes couples in committed relationships of 10 years or more with the oldest child ages 6 to 16. This sample set is identified throughout this study as long-term couples (LT). Both samples sets are of particular interest to this study due to the different challenges the couples may face at different developmental periods of their relationships. For example, couples with small children may identify specific negotiation practices based on the level of involvement needed to care for younger children, while couples that have older children may experience different negotiation practices because their children may be less dependent on parental caretaking.

Couples who participated in the CCS were selected by snowball sampling and included a diverse mix of cultures and ethnic groups including Latino (13%), Caucasian (50%), African-American (18%), and Asian partners (19%). Couples also consist of a wide range of educational, religious, and employment backgrounds. Table 1 shown below details the demographics of the couples in each sample set.

Table. 1

Demographics of Couples with Marital Care and Negotiation Processes

	Total Sample	Gendered Disengagement	Gendered Reciprocity	Relational Disengagement	Relational Reciprocity
Total	N = 68	N = 14	N = 34	N = 13	N = 7
Short Term Couples					
	N = 30	N = 8	N = 20	N = 1	N = 1
Years in relationship*	5.07 yrs	6.14 yrs	4.83 yrs	3 yrs	4 yrs
Age*	m = 32.56 yrs w = 31.45 yrs	m = 34.66 yrs w = 31.00 yrs	m = 30.05 yrs w = 28.55 yrs	m = 28.00 yrs w = 29.00 yrs	m = 26 yrs w = 26 yrs
Years of education*	m = 17.70 yrs w = 16.95 yrs	m = 16.00 yrs w = 14.40 yrs	m = 16.50 yrs w = 16.00 yrs	m = 16.00 yrs w = 14.00 yrs	m = 16 yrs w = 16 yrs
Both partners work out of the home	N = 17	N = 6	N = 9	N = 1	N = 1
One partner works out of the home/ One partner works in the home	N = 13	N = 2	N = 11	N = 0	N = 0
Long Term Couples					
	N = 38	N = 6	N = 14	N = 12	N = 6
Years in relationship*	14.63 yrs	10 yrs	13.21 yrs	16.67 yrs	18.5 yrs
Age*	m = 42.28 yrs w = 40.75 yrs	m = 41.50 yrs w = 38.83 yrs	m = 39.84 yrs w = 39.30 yrs	m = 42.63 yrs w = 41.50 yrs	m = 48.80 yrs w = 45.00 yrs
Years of education*	m = 17.81 yrs w = 16.00 yrs	m = 16.00 yrs w = 16.00 yrs	m = 15.85 yrs w = 15.66 yrs	m = 16.36 yrs w = 17.09 yrs	m = 17.66 yrs w = 17.33 yrs
Both partners work out of the home	N = 29	N = 4	N = 10	N = 9	N = 6
One partner works out of the home/ One partner works in the home	N = 9	N = 2	N = 4	N = 3	N = 0

* Average Mean

Interviews

The interviewers for the CCS were doctoral family therapy and family studies students. The interviewers were provided with a specific interview guide and trained on ways to consistently interview couples and ask probing questions that may lead to richer detail of experiences. Couples were informed of the purpose of the study and asked questions revolving around the areas of decision-making, marital equality, and overall relational ideology. Questions of interest for this particular study include, "How much time do you spend apart and together?" "How is the emotional work in the relationship divided?" "Who notices the needs of the other?" and "How would you say power plays out in your relationship?" Interviews were semi-structured and lasted approximately 1 to 2 hours in length. Interviews were taped and then later transcribed.

Analysis of Relational Ideals

Analysis of relational ideals is based on the notion that despite the trend towards egalitarian ideals couples continue to interact in ways that reinforce traditional gender patterns (Coontz, 2006; Gerson, 2010; Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009). We explored whether partners described predominantly traditional gender ideologies or more connected egalitarian ideals to position where they fell on the continuum. Analysis of traditional gender ideologies included how partners organized roles and interactions according to traditional male-female gender beliefs and practices. Traditional ideologies included descriptions of taken for granted male power, assumed gendered patters, and gendered emotional validation. Analysis of connected egalitarian ideals included descriptions of mutual exchanges of relational care such as mutual attention to well-being

and support. Connected egalitarian ideals included reciprocity, actualized efforts of care, working as a team, and mutual relational prioritizing.

Analysis of Negotiation

Analysis of negotiation is based on a social constructionist view that highlights change as a result of day-to-day interactions (Gergen, 2009). Thus, marital negotiation involves verbal and nonverbal interactions of bargaining, decision-making, and interpretations of meaning. We explored how directly or indirectly couples managed gender ideologies and practices. We also looked for verbal and non-verbal cues that suggested management practices revolving around ideals and practices of marital care.

Grounded Theory Analysis

We began with no predetermined codes. To begin the grounded theory analysis each interview was read completely once through. The first author made notes about initial impressions, ideas, and questions raised after each interview was read. After all 68 interviews were read the open coding process began (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). During this process each interview was read again, line by line, to note elements related to gender ideals and negotiation processes. Examples of items coded for traditional gender ideologies included “emotions are a woman’s thing,” “emotions are her department,” “we relate to each other is entirely male female, being a mother is what I’m meant to be. He’s the provider.” Items coded as egalitarian included “we notice the needs of each other,” “It takes more work on my part to recognize her needs,” “it is work to stay close, we make a daily choice to stay together, we chose to fight.” Throughout this process analytic memos were kept to keep track of thoughts and ideas that emerged as data was examined. Also,

"investigator triangulation" (Maxwell, 2005) was utilized by discussing impressions amongst members of the CCS research team to question and challenge the accuracy of developing patterns.

Next, axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) was used to organize and "flesh out" primary themes to develop categories and subcategories. Items coded similarly were organized under one category to assist in conceptualizing management processes in more abstract terms. Examples of coding at this level included, "avoidance," "implicit exchange," "dismissive," "reciprocal," "explicit exchange," and "mutual." During this stage, analytic memos were written to define relational management practices within categories. The data was tested using constant comparison of categories to determine their validity.

Finally, selective coding was used during the final level of analysis. We went back to the data to verify that the "core" categories accurately represent the primary phenomenon in the study (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Relational gender role ambiguity evolved as the central core theme. Implicit and explicit negotiation processes appeared to be at the core of this process. Data analysis suggested four primary forms of marital exchange of care: gendered disengagement (n = 14), gendered reciprocity (n = 34), relational disengagement (n = 13), and relational reciprocity (n = 7). Variations of partner ethnicity were examined and it was found that each typology contained a variety of ethic and cultural backgrounds. The results section details how couples are managing the exchange of marital care, and highlights the importance of deliberate negotiation practices in attempts to achieve a connected egalitarian relationship.

Results

Couples in this study are faced with managing *relational gender role ambiguity*. The ambiguity resides in the desire to maintain connection in the relationship despite conflicting internal and external messages about traditional gender beliefs and shifting beliefs and practices that revolve around egalitarian ideals. A wife comments, "you would figure after 12 years of marriage I would have a clear answer, but I still haven't figured it out. I think that if we believed in traditional roles, I would have a traditional answer for you, but we are not traditional."

Like previous studies in the Contemporary Couples Study, there are discrepancies between the beliefs partners in this study express regarding gender and the actual marital practices they describe. Partners lie on a continuum between traditional gender patterns and beliefs and connected egalitarian patterns and beliefs. There appeared to be no significant categorical differences between couples based on ethnicity, education, age, or religion. Couples from various demographics fell at different points on the continuum. How they are managing these opposing forces depends on how implicit or explicit they are in negotiating the discrepancies.

Figure 1 illustrates four primary ways partners attempt to negotiate the gender role ambiguity: gendered disengagement, gendered reciprocity, relational disengagement, and relational reciprocity. The analysis also highlights some differences between short-term and long-term couples that may give insight into possible processes couples develop over the course of relationship. A key finding is that explicit negotiation appears necessary to manage the complex nature of maintaining connection given the current context of changing gender ideas.

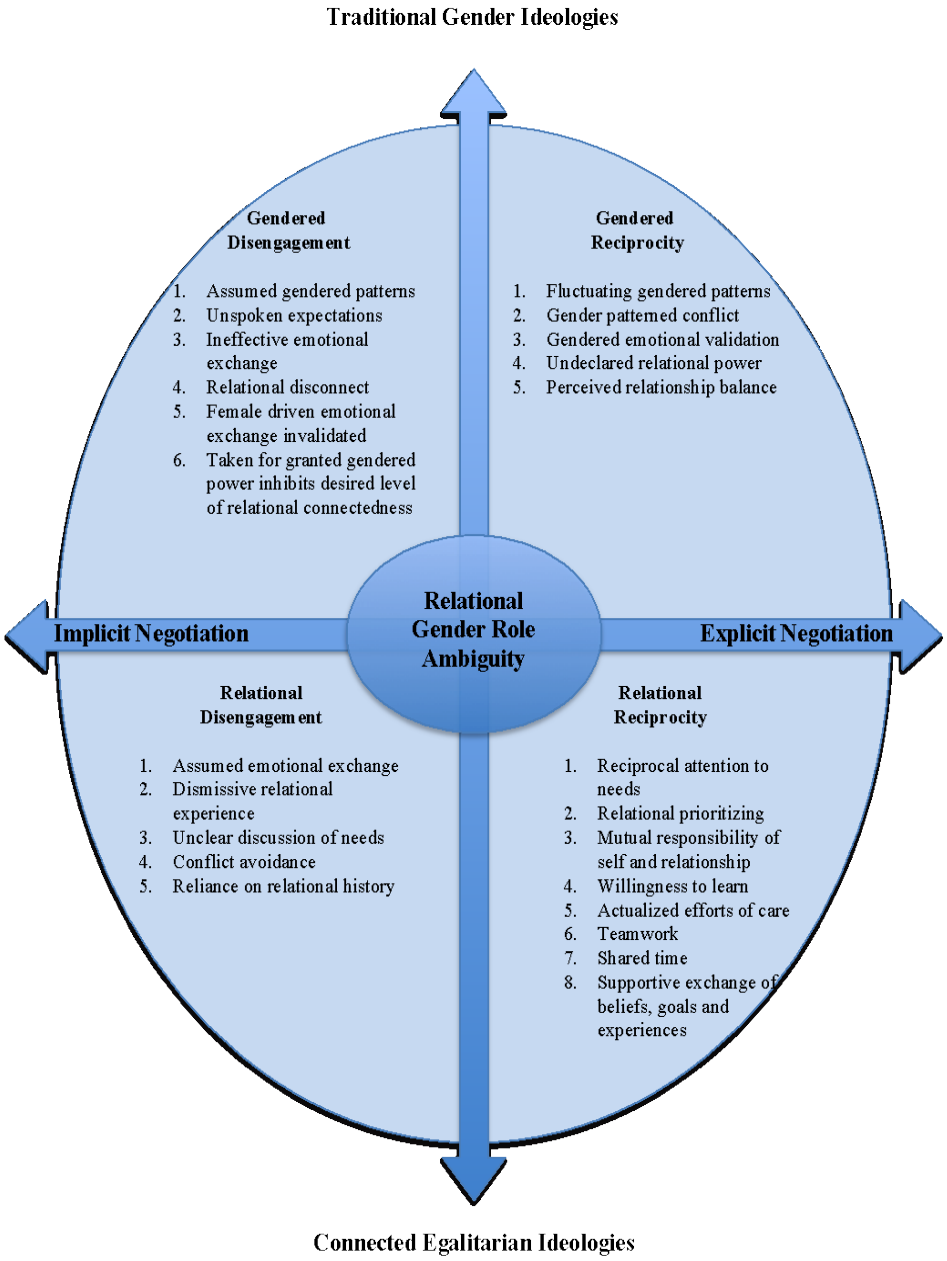

Figure 1: Model for Negotiated Relational Care

A Framework of Negotiated Relational Care

Relationships are fluid and evolve over time. Changes in life circumstances (job, number of children, years in the marriage) require partners to change and adapt to maintain the health of the relationship. Overall, men describe increasing their relational awareness in the marital dyad, but women continue to maintain primary responsibility for the push towards relational awareness. Women raise men's relational awareness primarily by increasing explicit negotiation practices. As a result, many men in the study report learning how to acknowledge and recognize the value of emotional connectedness for the health and longevity of relationship.

To better understand the variations in patterns of beliefs and practices demonstrated by couples in this study, it is helpful to characterize them around two key themes: ideologies and negotiation practices (Figure 1). The ideologies dimension (vertical) represents the degree to which couples fluctuate between traditional gender ideologies and connected egalitarian ideologies. The negotiation dimension (horizontal) demonstrates the continuum at which couples practice implicit negotiation that is often unintentional or not clearly expressed and explicit negotiation that is practiced in a more conscious or deliberate manner.

Ideologies

The ideologies dimension represents the pull between shifts of traditional gender ideologies and more connected egalitarian ideals. All couples to a varying degree described a sense that they were facing the challenge to take a position as to where they see themselves in relation to current shifting trends in gender beliefs, particularly

regarding emotional connection. On the traditional end of the continuum, couples generally held to ideals that perpetuate the role of women as primary initiators and maintainers of caretaking to family and partner. Here, men regularly expressed notions that emotional exchanges are not appropriate representations of manhood; placing them in the dominant position, whether implicitly or overtly, determining the validity of emotional exchange.

On the connected egalitarian end of the continuum couples generally believed that the emotional well being of the relationship is the responsibility of both partners, whether or not they have fully negotiated ways to bring their ideals to fruition. Overall, across the ideological dimension, women typically pushed for more connected egalitarianism than men, regardless of cultural background, education level, or length of time in the relationship.

Negotiation

The negotiation dimension identifies the general style for managing relational exchange described by the couples. On the implicit end, couples often demonstrated unspoken or implied ways to express connection and execute beliefs. These may involve assuming to know how the other may be feeling, using knowledge about similar past interactions, and unclear discussion of needs. Passivity or dismissiveness tended to dominate attempts at negotiation resulting in disengagement.

On the explicit negotiation end, couples often cited ways that they made conscious efforts to work through or bring to the surface challenges in the relationship. Whether or not partners were in agreement or a resolution was achieved, one or both

partners demonstrated a sustained commitment to openly address the importance of working through problems.

Relational Care

From the ideologies and negotiation dimensions four typologies could be identified: gendered disengagement, gendered reciprocity, relational disengagement, and relational reciprocity. Like all typologies, these were created as a result of the analytic process. Though not all couples necessarily fit neatly in to one category, we were able to categorize them based on which characteristics seemed most dominant. What follows is a description of each of the four categories with illustrations from the couple interviews. Partner names have been changed to protect confidentiality.

Gendered Disengagement

Couples categorized as gendered disengagement (ST=8/LT=6) bypass negotiating taken for granted gender patterns. They tend to maintain a level passivity with the assumption that things will work themselves out. In general, these couples hold closer to assumed traditional gender patterns where taken for granted gendered power inhibits their ability to attain their desired level of relational connectedness for both partners. There appeared to be no significant difference in management styles between short-term and long-term couples in this typology.

Often, women in this category assume primary responsibility for emotional exchange without question. Both partners may use traditional gender beliefs to excuse men from engaging in relational care. Mikes says that he's not big on expressing love "I

don't tell her enough, she'd like to hear love more, but I'm not like that." Jose says "emotions are a woman thing." Often partners operate out of unspoken expectations of care. When asked about noticing partner needs, men in this category struggled with identifying specific efforts. Tammy described her experience of going to an ultrasound alone while George decided to stay home and sleep. Tammy was unable to voice how she needed his support and how hurt she was that he made a choice not to attend. George was dismissive to Tammy's concern and spoke of his own fears that she may become paralyzed due to an epidural which would leave him to take care of the kids without her help. This couple was unable to effectively communicate their personal feelings and needs, thus missing an opportunity to gain better understanding about each other and engage in emotional connection.

Gendered disengaged couples describe stereotypically gendered communication patterns, but appear unable to address the ways traditional gender ideologies continue to impact relational connectedness by allowing male driven authority to determine what is and is not validated. Sue states, "I don't think he respects my ideas. He has no patience to listen to me. He is always negative, always shoots down my ideas. So I cannot communicate." As a consequence, these couples often experience ineffective emotional exchange. When discussing her ability to influence her husband Mary says, "I feel like there is no point going against his ego because it doesn't go anywhere." As a result, partners often experience a sense of relational disconnect and an increased level of ambiguity regarding how to sustain the well-being of the marriage overall.

Gendered Reciprocity

The largest portion of couples from both sample sets was represented in the gendered reciprocity category (ST=20/LT=14). These couples appear to appreciate some gendered divisions but make efforts to negotiate change when women raise concerns over egalitarian practices. Women appear better at openly expressing discontent when emotional needs are not being met. Though couples did not use specific language like "negotiation," they were able to describe more explicit ways they made decisions and worked though challenges.

Both short-term and long-term couples tended to note that decisions around gender divisions were made to accommodate obligations to work and child rearing. In fact, they often cited these obligations as barriers to engaging in and maintaining emotional connection within the relationship. Short-term couples with young children generally identified the need for mothers to be the primary caretakers due to their beliefs about the special developmental needs of young children. Beth says, "I'm very comfortable in my role…to be an at-home-mom, to take care of my husband and daughter and have those to be the largest priorities in my life… always my family is my priority."

Long-term couples spoke about the decisions that had to be made throughout different stages in the relationship to determine how roles got negotiated. Christina and Bryan report that after 24 years of marriage they prefer traditional gender roles to organize their family and that they have decided to "compromise' and "work through" problems to enhance what is the best interest of the family. Here, many couples were able to openly acknowledge how traditional gender ideologies continue to influence

interactions and discuss how they make efforts to communicate and "work through" gendered patterns. Partners acknowledge that communication, compromise, "give and take," asking questions, and agreeing to disagree are necessary components of relational care.

Partners in this typology were explicit in discussing the differences between men and women and how they manage problems accordingly. Interestingly, many of these couples reported that they believed the division of domestic labor felt more equal at times, but when discussing emotional needs and connection both husbands and wives reported that women take primary responsibility for tending to and noticing needs of the relationship. Couples tended to use gendered explanations as to the reason for this discrepancy, citing that women are just better at the emotional "stuff" or that men struggle with how to express emotion because they "are not wired that way". Also, these couples tended to use language that described more gendered types of care. Men demonstrate care by "step up to responsibilities" by "protecting and providing for the family." In some instances this type of demonstration of care from men proved sufficient to account for the lack of emotional exchange, such as affection and affirmations, that women reported they want.

It appeared challenging for these couples to acknowledge how gendered power may be present during emotional exchanges. It was common that husbands inadvertently discounted wives feelings about the lack of connection within the relationship. Unlike women in the relational disengagement typology, women in the gendered reciprocity category were more apt to verbalize their discontent and push to be heard. Some couples appeared to be moving in a direction where both partners were able to voice concerns and

negotiate emotional needs, while others continued to struggle to overcome the impact of gendered power.

Relational Disengagement

Long-term couples represent the majority of couples who fell into this typology (ST=1 / LT=12). These couples say they believe in achieving a connected egalitarian relationship but struggle with the implementation and practice of their beliefs. They may have entered the relationship with egalitarian beliefs or these beliefs may have evolved over time but they have been unable to negotiate how to mutually respond to their relational needs. Nonetheless, both partners generally express a strong belief of the importance of egalitarian relationship ideals and commitment to their relationship as top priority as they are "in it for the long haul." They emphasize the importance of shared hopes, aspirations, sharing of experiences, mutual admiration, and/or validation but struggle with ways to accomplish mutual exchange.

Relationally disengaged partners avoid addressing their struggle because they may not agree on management styles and/or they rely on assumed expectations. Brenda states, "…you should know what I need help with, you know that's the way I think…you know what I am doing so you should know what to do kind of thing and I don't want to have to ask, cause then I feel like I'm nagging…so I think that's normal." These couples experience fear as a dominating emotion when dealing with conflict and uncomfortable emotions. For husbands in particular, there appears to be a fear of not being able to meet the emotional needs of their wives, despite wanting to and recognizing the value of doing so. George is able to identify his feelings of uncertainty when addressing problems. He

says, "… you sometimes get defensive when I bring up things that are uncomfortable for you. I struggle with the right words to say because I don't want to offend you." In the interviews, discussions around the exchange of feelings and/or care were met with responses such as "it's not something we talk about."

These couples tend to rely on past experiences, unspoken feelings, and body language to gauge how to respond to one another rather than openly expressing thoughts and feelings. Instead they also rely on avoidance by "pulling away," "less interaction," and passive aggressive conflict management. They may "pick up that something is wrong," which may seem like a good beginning to being emotionally attuned, but they may not be able to actualize intended exchanges of relational care. The ambiguity for relational disengaged couples rests on wanting to maintain and practice egalitarian beliefs but an inability to effectively negotiate the necessary characteristics needed to actualize their ideals.

Relational Reciprocity

Almost all couples in this category were long-term couples that spoke about the challenges and realizations they have come to understand about what makes a marriage work. Partners who demonstrate relational reciprocity (ST=1/LT=6) tend to be better at actualizing their ideals of equality and connection. This is not to say that these partners are without struggle, but these couples tend to be closest to engaging in a connected egalitarian relationship. Both partners emphasize that their relationship takes priority and they engage in conscious efforts to tend to the health of the relationship. Partners report that they "hold each other accountable" for equal participation in the relationship. Joe

describes that their relationship is “reciprocal,” where contributing is a daily choice that is worth making and that both partners have a responsibility to ask, “what can I do to support you.” These couples have made attempts at minimizing power differentials by making explicit efforts to hold each other accountable and responsible for making the relationship mutually benefitting to both partners.

There is recognition that daily tasks and relational responsibilities need to be openly negotiated for the overall well being of the family. Unlike the gendered reciprocity couples, these couples report that on-going open negotiation is required to not only manage family responsibilities but that it is necessary to marital care. Julia and Peter have been married for 20 years and they recall the series of “long negotiation sessions” that they engaged in over their marriage to work through job circumstances and attending to childcare.

Relational themes that emerged revolved around reciprocal attention to needs, “teamwork,” and mutual responsibility of self and within the relationship. Jack describes, “…the time when you are learning how to be a we instead of just an I.” Joy says “we notice the needs of each other… no one is a mind reader and we can’t assume that the other should know.” Often disagreements or conflict is viewed as an opportunity to learn about the needs of each other and the relationship. One husband clearly explains:

> “We do our best to think like the other person and to act as they would act. Marriage is a partnership and corporation, as harsh as it sounds. If you function on that premise and incorporate feelings and emotions when applicable things can run smoother than the average person. One of the most important ways we solve conflict is to never yell at each other, never swear at each other, and don’t put the other down.”

Partners characterized with relational reciprocity make continued efforts to demonstrate care in terms of looking out for each other, communicating about each other's thoughts and opinions, and an overall commitment to the longevity of the relationship despite all odds. Interestingly, it was the men who made the majority of relational comments regarding what they have learned from their wives about what it takes to meet the needs of the relationship. Comments such as "she taught me" and "I had to learn" indicated the willingness to let go of previously held notions of traditional masculine ideals. Larry says, "I take out the trash… do laundry and dishes and that doesn't make me less of a man." Men in this category appeared to have acknowledged the value in learning ways to be more relational and the impact it has on maintaining connection. Joel and Jackie, an African-American couple that have been married for 19 years, describe what Joel has learned about taking care of the needs of his relationship. He is adamant that he has learned to value his relationship and his wife above all other things, he states, "…be observant you know, I like watching her; she's intriguing to me, she's an interesting person… but she's my person and my interest is in her well being what ever it may be." Both partners in this typology make continued reference to the need to be flexible and willing to put selfish intentions aside, work as a team, provide support, and continually share ever-changing ideals and goals.

One might imagine that these couples are closer to the idealized connected egalitarian relationship, but not one of the couples made mention that they believed they had "figured it all out." Instead, these couples seemed to still wonder if they were doing it "right." These couples described the many relational challenges they had faced and how they were still struggling with shifting gender ideals and practices. There was recognition

that a level of unknowing ambiguity was present with regards to maintaining egalitarian ideas and practices over time. Some couples in this typology recognized how easily life circumstances, such as a change in financial needs or changing family structure, could place stress on the relationship and possibly revert the couple to rely on previously held traditional gender practices. Thus, a primary recurrent theme of ambiguity appeared present for all couples despite where they fell on the continuums between gender ideologies and negotiation practices.

Relational Gender Role Ambiguity: The Central Dimension

The tension between shifting traditional gender patterns and the desire for a connected egalitarian relationship appears to be creating an experience of confusion and struggle for participants in the study, identified here as relational gender role ambiguity. Most of the couples appear being pulled between making decisions, whether conscious or unconscious, about holding onto and shifting away from traditional gender patterns. The struggle is only compounded by the fact that certain beliefs don't become actualized by practice.

Many couples struggled with answering questions regarding who tends to the emotional work or needs of the relationship. Couples commented that they never thought of responsibility of needs within relationship with one another. When explored, strong feelings of guilt seemed to emerge for both men and women. For example, some women feel bad about not being able to tend to family/partner needs as well as they believe they should. Mary describes this here,

> "I think something I'm dealing with right now is that I'm providing the income. It's ok, and I don't feel upset that he's not providing the income. What is hard is that I feel the pressure to support him domestically. I am working hard so much

> and so long since I am a teacher. I don't have time to do the laundry and dishes. I don't clean or cook, because this is my first real job and I'm trying to survive in the job world. He does everything. So I am struggling with that, because I'm supposed to be the wife, but I'm not at all doing anything domestic. I worry that he thinks I'm a bad wife because I'm not cooking or cleaning or doing anything."

Some men were able to recognize that they don't contribute to the emotional needs of their wives as well as they could. Gary described how he feels guilty that he is not doing more for his wife. He calls himself a "lazy sucker" and admits that when problems arise he "fails to communicate" and demonstrates insensitivity to his wife's frustrations. Some husbands also appeared adamant about not wanting to have or maintain power within the relationship. They stressed how they wanted their wives to be more open and vocal about their ideals, needs, and opinions when making decisions. Tom, for example, was sure to point out the he "values" his wife's opinion and used "we" language throughout the interview. Scott points out that it can be difficult to know how his wife feels; he states, "I can tell by her body language… she needs some prompting sometimes."

A sense of tension is present for all couples to a varying degree. Most couples described balancing tradition with current shifts in gender role responsibilities. The tension is created by internal and external messages about what it means to be a woman, a man, and in a committed relationship. Internal messages about traditional gender beliefs are highly present where women report a "responsibility" to be family focused, care to the needs of her husband and children and men are supposed to focus taking care of financial and protection needs. Partners used language like, "it's my job." However, there are also strong external conflicting messages that encourage women to "have it all"

(family, education, career) but still maintain primary responsibility to be the emotional gatekeeper. For women, there is a pull between motherhood and career. In fact, one wife became quite emotional during the interview as she described the guilt she experienced after quitting her job to take on motherhood full time. She reported that she believed she was taking advantage of her husband by placing full financial responsibility on him. She struggled with definitions of "fair contribution" to the family and discounted the work she was doing by taking care of the emotional and domestic needs of the family.

Men in the study also faced conflicting external messages; they are still supposed to be rough and tough, a "real man's man" but also help out in the house, do laundry, dishes and change diapers. Interestingly, though many men described the desire to be close and connected with their wives and children, they continue to struggle with the implementation of their desires due to internal messages about masculinity.

Though the position of ambiguity can be frustrating, on the flip side, it is often through struggle that couples find clarity, balance and opportunity for growth. Couples in the relational reciprocity category appear to recognize the importance of both partners mutually engaging in the "fight" to maintain connection. They acknowledge that the process is challenging but worthwhile to achieve the relationship they desire. These partners take ownership of their actions and offer relational solutions that may improve martial satisfaction. Overall, it appears that partners who are flexible to change and willing to work through challenges demonstrate a greater likelihood of achieving and maintain connection throughout the life of the relationship.

Discussion and Implications

Until recently, the biggest movement in the literature regarding gender equality mainly revolved around the division of labor (Garey & Hansen, 2011). The Contemporary Couples Study has contributed to a shift in the literature to focus on equality in terms of mutual attention and examining how gendered power impacts marital care (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009). This study supports Jonathan & Knudson-Martin (2012), in that all couples in the study say they desire connection and that emotional attunement is an important aspect to getting there. In fact, the desire to connect appeared consistent across all demographic variations in this study, to say that despite one's background, age, or education, people want to experience genuine connection within relationship. Attunement practices, such as reading each other's feelings, feeling felt, and processes of being "in-sync" with one another are important and necessary pathways to connection but may be limited by their implicit, indirect nature. It's not uncommon for partners to misinterpret intentions and expectations or project personal emotions and make assumptions about how another feels (Johnson, 2004).

This study takes these findings further by focusing on how well couples' management styles assist in attaining the practices they desire. It highlights how specific explicit negotiation practices, such as voicing concerns, working through problems, and a willingness to continually manage personal and relational changes are necessary to achieve mutual connection. Like earlier studies (Hochschild & Machung 2003; Hurst, 2005; Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 1998; 2005), this analysis demonstrates the inconsistencies couples experience between expectations of equality within their relationship and what they actually practice in terms of mutual emotional exchange.

The Challenge of Reciprocal Care

This study demonstrates that reciprocity, in terms of mutual care, is pivotal in maintaining connection in a marriage over time. However, there are several major challenges that arise when exploring the exchange of care in a relationship. First, the couples in this study highlight the subjective nature of marital care. Partners in this study come from different cultural, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds. They are likely to be different in the way that they express care and wish to receive it, for some it is through acts of kindness, for others through physical touch or affirmations, and for many it could be a combination of acts depending on the situation (Chapman, 2009). Unfortunately, partners often make assumptions about how and when to openly express care because they may be unable to express needs and are unaware of the gendered power that is inherent in their interactions (Jordan, 2009; Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009; Lerner, 2001).

Second, the expression of care can be complicated in terms of gender equality. Partners may be able to express care but it can be difficult to track who is caring for whom (Johnson, 2008). This study demonstrates that for the majority of couples it was women who often initiated and maintained connections within the relationship. Though men are moving in the direction of going beyond traditional gender scripts to recognize the value of connection, this study suggests most still have quite a way to go in terms of making continued efforts without prompting or "nagging" from their wives. Even women in the gendered reciprocity category also contribute to perpetuate men's unequal efforts to care by excusing husbands due to gender stereotypes and/or "took what they could get" to justify how expression of care seemed equal.

Finally, though women are gaining in terms of societal power, many women are still unable to openly express personal worth and require shared power within their relationships. We live in a society where messages about care and connection present a double bind for both men and women. All people need emotional connection to thrive but expressing emotions continues to be seen as an act of weakness. Thus, partners face a significant challenge to negotiate what is needed and expected in terms of care in their relationship to sustain it over a lifetime.

The Importance of Negotiation

This study demonstrates the value of intentional efforts to work through problems, definitions, and expectations of shifting beliefs to maintain a relationship over time. It appeared mostly short-term couples struggled with the ability to see beyond gendered power to consistently engage in negotiation practices that encouraged reciprocal care. Mostly, long-term relational reciprocity couples were closer to actualizing the ideal of a connected egalitarian relationship because they are more intentional about their negotiation practices. They actively work through what they envision a genuine connected egalitarian relationship looks like. They communicate about their feelings and needs and recognize that sometimes, conflict or uncomfortable discussions are necessary. The women in this study who were better able to voice their relational needs and the men who were able to see the value in relational connectedness demonstrated the closest resemblance to achieving a mutually connected relationship. In contrast, the long-term couples that were not able to explicitly negotiate were caught in emotionally disengaged relationships that did not enable them to realize their egalitarian ideals.

This study contributes to the literature that suggests that partners must make continued efforts to intentionally negotiate shifting definitions, relational needs, and other domestic practices (Gottman, 2011; Jonathan & Knudson-Martin 2012). It also demonstrates the continued hold traditional gendered power has on partner's ability to achieve the level of connection they desire. The couples in this study offer a valuable glimpse into the challenges they face as they make attempts to cope with ever changing gender ideals. This research also contributes to the body of literature that focuses on effective partner management practices that make relationships last over time (Gottman, 2012). Findings may assist clinicians working with couples to become more aware of the importance of explicit negotiation practices and learn to engage in ways that bring to light taken-for-granted gendered power that inhibits mutual relational care.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The couples in this study appeared to be experiencing pull between traditional gender ideologies and ideals of a connected egalitarian relationship. Couples struggle with ways to effectively manage actualizing their ideals. This conclusion was developed as a result of answers to questions that focused specifically on equality, decision-making, allocated time, and emotional connection. The results indicated here were developed from responses taken collectively rather than specific questions that focused on negotiation processes. Negotiation practices were implied in asking, "who notices, how did you decide, and how has this changed over time." Future studies could specifically use language of negotiation or gather participant's definitions of martial negotiation to gain a more holistic exploration of the processes that may emerge.

Part of this limitation is that this study relied on previously attained transcripts. It was not possible to have couples elaborate on negotiation practices and implications of ambiguity. Also, we were not able to ask probing questions or have direct observation of participant responses. As a result, additional information about their feelings of possible confusion and guilt were not explored. Couples in the study were asked to be interviewed together as part of the study protocol. This was beneficial to make note of the back and forth discussion between partners and their negotiation practices. However, partners may have been able to share more openly about feelings of dissatisfaction or problems had they also been interviewed separately. Some partners may have been reluctant to voice concerns due to fears of relational repercussions following the interview. It is also likely that the most conflicted couples and those with greater gendered power imbalance may have not volunteered to be interviewed about their relationship.

Also, the differences between the typologies may also speak to larger contextual factors impacting contemporary couples. Questions specifically regarding the impact of culture or religion were not explored in the CCS. Future studies may examine ways in which couples' negotiation practices are enhanced or inhibited by factors such as culture and/or religion. A study focusing specifically on cultural differences between couples or partners from difference cultural backgrounds may significantly add to the body of literature given the cultural context of mixed culture couples in the United States.

Finally, we had an interest in learning about how couples manage connection over time and access to two sets of data of couples at two separate relational development points. However, a limitation is that the sample was not longitudinal. The interviews used allowed for a "snap-shot" in time to explore how couples might be dealing with these

issues. A later study might be able to look at the same couples across time to get a better analysis of the changes in patterns and beliefs. This may assist with continued efforts to examine what makes marriages last over time and how couples continue to integrate shifting gendered beliefs and practices.

Implications for Practice

The study findings have implications for those working with couples that may be struggling with managing the tension between traditional gender patterns and the desire for a connected egalitarian relationship. It is more likely that partners who are able to openly negotiate beliefs and practices may be better equipped to sustain mutual connection within their marriage. Though the process may be difficult to achieve, the outcome may result in happier partners and more stable relationships over time.

Therapists may help partners to bring to the surface taken-for-granted gender beliefs and patterns that may be inhibiting negotiation within the relationship. Therapists may also help couples identify common patterns of interactions that contribute to the level of disengagement or reciprocity experienced between partners. This may provide couples with a sense of relief and normalize the difficult nature of maintaining connection throughout the life of a relationship. Finally, these findings highlight that partner negotiation is necessary at all stages of relational development. Partners may struggle at any point during their relationship and cannot assume that the length of time in the relationship determines the level of connection they may have. Therapists working with couples struggling with these issues may ultimately use these findings to determine

the type of relationship they desire and possibly shift management practices from one typology to another.

A case example is provided to demonstrate how a therapist may work with a couple to explore and practice explicit negotiation practices to achieve a mutually connected relationship. Sue and Brian have been married for eight years and have three children, ages 2, 6, and 8. The couple seeks therapy because they're struggling with ways to keep connected due to the demands of work and childcare. Both partners work full time and report that they don't spend enough time together. Sue states, "I know Brian has to work to take care of all of us but it's like we are strangers to one another, we never talk, and he assumes that I will take care of everything. Doesn't he see that I work too?" Brian responds, " I know that things have been tough but what does she expect from me, I can't read her mind." The results of this study may help the treating therapist to not only challenge the couple to examine the taken for granted gender patterns but also how implicit practices may be inhibiting mutual exchange of marital care. The following demonstrates some ways the therapist could work with Sue and Brian.

Challenging Gendered Power

Researchers of the Contemporary Couples Study have produced significant results suggesting the responsibility of therapists working with couples to acknowledge the ways in which gendered power continues to impact the interactions and decisions partners make daily (e.g., Cowdery & Knudson-Martin, 2006, Jonathan & Knudson-Martin, 2012; Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2005; Matta & Knudson-Martin, 2006). In response, a clinical research group at Loma Linda University has developed the socio-emotional relationship therapy (SERT) practice model to specifically challenge gendered power and

utilize socio-cultural attunement to improve connection between partners seeking therapeutic intervention (e.g., Knudson-Martin & Huenergardt; 2010; Pandit, Kang, Chen, Knudson-Martin, & Huenergardt, in press; Williams, 2011; Williams, Galick, Knudson-Martin & Huenergardt, 2012).

A therapist working with Sue and Brian from the SERT model would assist each partner in identifying how each of their contributions to the relationship help to shape their identities. Feedback such as, " It sounds important to both of you that the contributions you each bring to the relationship are validated," may invite the couple to experience shared worth and relational power. The SERT therapist may also encourage each partner to share emotions surrounding their experience to promote reciprocal relationship responsibility, with particular emphasis on helping Brian be both personally vulnerable and attentive to Sue's needs and perspectives. The goal is to acknowledge and transform the impact of gendered power through learning to take responsibility for emotions and interactions that occur as a result of the gendered sociocultural context, such as both partners' mixed feelings around their work and family roles and the strong feelings that arise. Therapists are attentive to making it safe for partners to move beyond limiting gender stereotypes that can limit mutual engagement in addressing difficult issues and help partners work through their gender role ambivalence so common in study. By doing so, they gain the potential to actualize their desire for a connected egalitarian relationship.

Practicing Explicit Negotiation

Explicit negotiation appears to be a strong determinant of working through the gender role tensions that continue to persist in relationships. A therapist working with Sue and Brian might explore who is able to openly express thoughts and feelings by asking each partner to describe interactional processes when managing a difficult situation. The therapist would be listening for whose thoughts and feelings were validated and how confidently each person was in expressing themself. The therapist would discuss with Sue and Brian the relational gender ambiguity they may be experiencing and educate them about the dominant patterns they are engaging in that may be limiting their level of connection. Like many couples, Brian and Sue are likely to be unaware of gendered power playing out within their relationship. The therapist may also initiate interventions that encourage Briand and Sue to work through decision making to develop a family plan that is beneficial to the overall well being of the relationship.

Partners join in the union of marriage to attain love and care from one another "till death" due them part. Still, according to the National Marriage Project (2012), over 50% of marriages in the U.S. end in divorce. Given this statistic, the state of the contemporary marriage is in crisis. Currently, men and women are grappling with ever evolving gender ideals and expectations on a societal level that is significantly impacting them on a domestic level. This study highlights the need for both partners to engage in explicit relational practices that promote reciprocal emotional connection. The implementation and maintenance of these practices will require continued effort by both partners over the life of the relationship. Though this can be daunting, given the pressures

all couples face, this study shows that couples that are able to do engage in this process have the potential to achieve the level of marital connection they desire.

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APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Do NOT recruit a close friend or family member. You may recruit acquaintances.

When a potential participant is personally known to you.

The Department of Counseling and Family Sciences at Loma Linda University is making a collection of stories in order to study the experiences of contemporary couples. We are currently conducting interviews with married couples whose oldest child is five years old or younger or couples in committed relationships of 10 years or more with the oldest child ages 6 to 16. We know such couples face many challenges in our rapidly changing world and need to learn more about what real people are experiencing.

Since you [state how they fit into the life stage of couple you are seeking] I thought you might be interested in participating in this study. You should feel absolutely NO obligation at all to participate, but if you'd like I can tell you more about it……. (If yes)… You would be asked to engage in a guided conversation with me (or someone else if you prefer) about your marriage, what is important to you, how it works on a day to day basis, how you deal with the issues that come up. It would not be a therapy session. The purpose would simply be to understand about marriage through your eyes. No evaluation or judgment of your relationship would be made. It would take about an hour and a half of your time. Unfortunately we can't pay you for your time, but most people find the conversation interesting and worthwhile. If for some reason you started to feel uncomfortable and did not want to continue we would stop. Of course everything

you say is completely confidential. What do you think? Do you have other questions? (If they say yes or ask more about how it works…)

For you to participate in the study your partner will also need to agree to participate. Will that be possible?... Most couples are interviewed together, although I could interview you separately. Which would you prefer? We can do the interview at your home, or if you prefer, on campus. --- make arrangements --- When we meet for the interview on ____ we will review the procedures involved in this study and ask each of you to sign a consent form documenting your willingness to participate.

When a potential respondent is not known to you.

Introduce yourself as a doctoral student in the Department of Counseling and Family Sciences at Loma Linda University. I recently interviewed (or spoke with regarding) name of referral for a study we are doing with [state type of couple you are seeking]. (Referral Source) thought you might be interested. We know such couples face many challenges in our rapidly changing world. To learn more about what real people are experiencing, we are making a collection of their stories. May I tell you more about the project? Continue as above.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

CONTEMPORARY COUPLES STUDY
Carmen Knudson-Martin, PhD
Professor and Director of Doctoral Programs
Department of Counseling and Family Sciences

I. SUMMARY

This interview study is a continuation of previous work examining how contemporary couples are adapting to and defining their intimate and family relationships within a changing social and economic context. The research focuses on three areas, (1) relationship ideals, (2) relationship structures and behaviors, and (3) decision-making and problem-solving. Open-ended interviews with couples will be based on an interview guide that addresses each of these areas yet also allows respondents to focus on the issues of particular relevance to them. Interviews will be transcribed and analyzed using a constant-comparison qualitative method. Results will help researchers, practitioners, and educators explain relational behavior and develop theory to guide program development and interventions that are grounded in the lived experience of contemporary couples.

PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

Rationale.

Numerous studies show that while ideals regarding couple relationships are changing, changes in structured relationship patterns and behaviors lag considerably behind. Couples face contradictory cultural, social, and economic contexts that propel them toward new ways of organizing their lives together while, at the same time, make it difficult for them to respond creatively. Previous research and clinical experience

suggests that couples today frequently experience stress and dissatisfaction because they are unable to develop the kind of relationships they seek. Similarly, practitioners are stymied in their efforts to help by models that do not accurately take into account the taken-for-granted, but changing, cultural constructions and social and economic structures that influence relationship development. One of the most useful ways to study cultural and societal patterns is an in-depth exploration of the ways members of a society or group constitute them. This research project thus goes directly to couples to provide the narratives that will be the basis for systematic analysis of contemporary relational patterns and dilemmas.

B. Objectives/Problem Statement

The first purpose of this project is to examine how contemporary couples are constructing their relationships in order to develop understandings and explanations of relational processes that can guide practice in education, program development, and counseling. Specific research questions include.

How do contemporary couples construct their relationship ideals and expectations?

What do couples do when their relationship structures and behaviors do not coincide with their ideals?

How do changing and contradictory cultural, social, and economic contexts play out within couple's decision-making and problem-solving processes?

What patterns of thought and/or behavior inhibit or promote creative response to the social circumstances within which couples live.

A secondary purpose to build a data bank of in-depth couple narratives, which may be used in future studies and in longitudinal analyses.

Previous Studies, Background

This project builds on the following previous work of Carmen Knudson-Martin, primary investigator for this proposal, and Anne Rankin Mahoney at the University of Denver:

Knudson-Martin, C. & Mahoney, A. (1996). Gender Dilemmas and Myth in the Construction of Marital Bargains. Family Process, 35, 137-153

Knudson-Martin, C. & Mahoney, A. (1998). Language and Processes in the Construction of Marital Equality in New Marriages. Family Relations, 47, 81-91.

Knudson-Martin, C. & Mahoney, A. (1999). Beyond Different Worlds: A "Post-gender" Approach to Relational Development. Family Process, 38, 325-340.

Mahoney, A. & Knudson-Martin, C. (1995) Negotiating Mutuality: The process of Becoming a Couple." Paper presented at the Theory Construction and Research Methods Workshop of the Annual Meeting of the National Council on Family Relations, Portland

Mahoney, A. & Knudson-Martin, C. (1997). Gender, Family, and Work: Old Expectations and New Realities" Groves Conference on Marriage and the Family. Digby, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Mahoney, A. & Knudson-Martin, C. (1999). The Different Faces of Equality: Issues of Power, Conflict, and Responsibility in Long-term Couples who Describe Themselves as Egalitarian. Presentation at the National Council on Family Relations annual meeting. Irvine, CA.

These projects, based on interviews with newly-married and long-term couples and extensive reviews of the related literature, found that only those couples who were able to raise uncomfortable issues and deal directly with conflict were able to create mutual relationships that supported the intimacy and creative problem solving. The vast majority

of couples interviewed, however, were limited by constructions of gender that were inconsistent with their ideals and by social structures that limited the options they considered. The research identified specific ways of thinking and behaviors that contributed to short-term stability at the expense of problem resolution. These interviews, however, are now more that a decade old and limited to a white, relatively well educated set of respondents. The new project will give access to a more recent and more diverse population and, over an extended period of time, allow in-depth study of couples over many life stages and circumstances.

METHODS

Overview.

This study will follow a constant-comparison approach to the development of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This approach begins with a small, relatively similar group of cases and through a process of coding and categorization, identifies various types or aspects of the phenomena under consideration. When new responses do not fit those already identified, new categories are created. Analysis moves from simple categorization to determining how the categories are related to each other. Hypotheses from one case are brought to another to see in what ways they do or do not explain the next case. No attempt is made to generalize in the statistical sense. Respondents are selected for theoretical reasons in order to determine the extent to which the findings from one case or set of circumstances appear to apply to another. Data collection and analysis continues until new categories no longer appear or the limits of a particular explanation appear to be defined.

Length and Scope of Study

Data collection for this study will begin with 20 married couples with an oldest child aged five or younger. Future sets of interviews will target other kinds of couples, for example, retired couples, not-yet-married couples, remarried couples, couples with adolescents, etc. Every effort will also be made to extend interviews across socio-economic and ethnic groups. A total of approximately 100 couples (200 people) are expected. Longitudinal study involving follow-up interviews at two and five years is planned.

Because this kind of in-depth study is very time-intensive and because new topics for focus are constantly being generated as more information is collected, the time frame for this study is open-ended. The target date for completion of data analysis and manuscript preparation of the first phase of the study (couples with young children) is December 2001. Additional interviews and analyses are expected to continue for at least five years.

Sample Selection

Sample selection will be via word of mouth. The initial interview group will be generated through contacts made by doctoral students enrolled in MFTH 604: Advanced Qualitative Research. These students will ask people they know or can identify (who meet the criteria of the theoretically targeted group) if they would be interested in participating in a research interview. Appendix A shows the script that will be used to solicit participants.

At the end of each interview, respondents will be asked to suggest additional persons who might be interested in participating. The respondents will given the option of giving the interviewer the name and phone number of the person, or checking first with the person and calling the interviewer back with the name and phone number.

The Interviews

Participants will be given the option of being interviewed in their homes or at the Department of Counseling and Family Sciences at LLU. Previous experience suggests that most persons will elect to be interviewed in their homes. The interviews will take the form of a guided conversation based on an interview guide (Appendix B). All participants will be asked questions regarding each topic on the interview guide, but the interviews will be an interactive event in which the interviewer focuses primarily on the issues and topics that seem most salient to the respondent. Some couples may be interviewed individually. Most will be interviewed together. Couple interviews will last approximately 1-½ hours. Individual interviews will take somewhat less time. Interviews will be audiotaped. No children will be interviewed.

Training and Qualifications of Interviewers

All interviewers will:

Be marital and family therapists with experience talking with people about personal issues.

Be Counseling and Family Sciences faculty or graduate students currently or previously enrolled in MFTH 604: Advanced Qualitative Methods

Be trained in interview techniques specific to this project and distinguished from therapy (where the purpose includes intervention as well as understanding)

Transcription and Storage of Interview Data.

The taped interviews will be transcribed and stored on disk. Interviews will be stored by number only. All names will be removed on the transcribed data. Only members of the research team will have access to the transcribed interviews. After transcription, the audio-tapes will be destroyed. Names and addresses of respondents who give permission to be recontacted will be stored separately from the transcripts.

Confidentiality of Respondents in Presentation of Results

Information received during the interviews will be held in the strictest of confidence. If quotes or case examples from an interview are used in the written or oral presentation of results, all identifying data will be changed to prevent recognition of any individual participants.

Appendix A: Recruitment Script

Do NOT recruit a close friend or family member. You may recruit acquaintances.

When potential participant is personally known to you

Department of Counseling and Family Sciences at Loma Linda University is making a collection of stories in order to study the experiences of contemporary couples. We are currently conducting interviews with married couples whose oldest child is five years old or younger. We know such couples face many challenges in our rapidly changing world and need to learn more about what real people are experiencing.

Since you [state how they fit into the life stage of couple you are seeking] I thought you might be interested in participating in this study. You should feel absolutely NO obligation at all to participate, but if you'd like I can tell you more about it…….

(If Yes)…You would be asked to engage in a guided conversation with me (or someone else if you prefer) about your marriage, what is important to you, how it works on a day to day basis, how you deal with the issues that come up. It would not be a therapy session. The purpose would simply be to understand about marriage through your eyes. No evaluation or judgment of your relationship would be made. It would take about an hour and a half of your time. Unfortunately we can't pay you for your time, but most people find the conversation interesting and worthwhile. If for some reason you started to feel uncomfortable and did not want to continue we would stop. Of course everything you say is completely confidential. What do you think? Do you have other questions?

(If they say yes or ask more about how it works…)

For you to participate in the study your partner will also need to agree to participate. Will that be possible? …….Most couples are interviewed together, although I could interview you separately. Which would you prefer?

We can do the interview at your home, or if you prefer, on campus.

---make arrangements--- When we meet for the interview on ___we will review the procedures involved in this study and ask each of you to sign a consent form documenting your willingness to participate.

When potential respondent is not known to you.

Introduce yourself as a doctoral student in the Department of Counseling and Family Sciences at LLU. I recently interviewed (or spoke with regarding) _____name of referral for a study we are doing with [state type of couple you are seeking]. (Referral Source) thought you might be interested. We know such couples face many challenges in our rapidly changing world. To learn more about what real people are experiencing, we care making a collection of their stories. May I tell you more about the project? Continue as above.

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Contemporary Couples Study

Each interview should address all of the following general questions, followed by probes to expand and clarify meaning and to pursue topics raised by the respondents. Elicit specific examples. Ask "why?" The order and wording of the questions may be altered to fit the flow of the conversation.

Getting Started

Begin with a few moments of "small talk" to engage the respondents and help them feel comfortable. Use clues from their surroundings (if interview is in their home) to connect with them in a personal way or ask about their drive (if they come in for an interview).

Review the purpose of the study and the informed consent document, stressing confidentiality and eliciting their questions. Obtain the informed consent of each participant.

Tell couples that they are participating in a directed conversation; that you are interested in how they think about their relationships; that you are NOT evaluating them, but learning from them. Remind them that they may decline to answer any question or shut off the tape or conclude the interview at any time. Ask if there are any other questions.

Complete personal data sheet.

Brief History of the Relationship

Begin by sharing your "story." How did you meet?

Probes: What attracted you to each other? Why this person?

Reiterate how long they have been married and ask about major changes over time; i.e., birth of children, moves, job/career changes

Relationship Ideology

What to you constitutes a “good” relationship?

Probes: What do expect from your partner? How do you view your responsibility to the relationship?

In what ways might your relationship ideas be influenced by your gender experience as a man or a woman?

How have your expectations changed over time?

Probe for definitions and examples

How would you know if there was a problem in your relationship? What might be signs that it wasn’t working the way you wanted it to? (A hypothetical question)

How do you determine if a relationship was fair to both persons?

Is equality important to you? Why or why not? In what ways?

How has your experience regarding fairness changed over time?

What do you do to preserve fairness in the relationship?

Which issues are particularly difficult?

Are there on-going fairness issues that you have not really been able to resolve? How do you deal with them?

Be sure to get perspectives of both partners?

Relationship Structures and Behaviors

How much time do you spend apart and together?

How do you decide? Who? When? Doing What? Why?

How well is this balance working for each?

How has this changed over time?

How do you divide household responsibilities?

How did you decide? Who? When? Doing What? Why?

How well is this division working? What interferes? What causes problems?

How you do divide time and responsibilities with your child(ren)?

How did you decide? Who? When? Doing What? Why?

How well is this division working? What interferes? What causes problems?

What do you see as your role as mother? Father?

How have these changed over time?

How is the emotional work in the relationship divided?

Who notices the needs of the other? How? When? Why?

How do they respond top each other's needs and issues?

13. How do you stay emotionally connected to each other?

Be sure to probe each partner

How has your sense of connection changed over time? What factors influence this for you?

How is physical affection and sexuality part of your relationship together?

Has your way of expressing sexual closeness changed over time?

Traditional relationship models gave men power and authority in relationships. How would you say that power plays out in your relationship?

Probe for hidden power, i.e., changes schedules to fit the other? Doesn't do something because partner doesn't like it? Limits choices?

How did you decide about power and authority? Who? When? Doing What? Why?

What, if anything, have you given up to be in this relationship? What made you willing to do this?

Decision-Making and Conflict Resolution

What kinds of decisions have you had to make during your relationship?

How did you deal with them?

Examples?

Which decisions are the hardest? Easiest? Why?

How have economics influenced your decisions?

Think of a time when there was a conflict between the two of you? Did you solve it? How?

Ask Permission to Re-contact

After the interview is complete, thank respondents and tell them we may want to re-contact them for a follow up interview or for possible future studies. Tell them this would mean that though we will have deleted their names from the transcript of their

interview, we would keep their name and contact information in a separate file. Have all respondents indicate on the Consent for Re-contact Form whether or not they wish to be re-contacted.

Background Information
Each partner needs to complete

Couple #_____ (for research project to complete) Date Interviewed _____

Sex: ____Male ____Female Date of Birth 19_____(Year)

Race: (Choose One) ___Black ___Hispanic ___ White ___ Asian ___ Native American

With what ethnic group do you identify? (i.e, Korean, Mexican, Greek, etc.)
_____

Marital Status:___ Married___Never-Married___Divorced___Widowed ___ Remarried_____
If remarried number of marriages___

Current or Previous Occupation _____

How many children are currently living at home? _____
List their ages_____

Do you have grown children or other children that do not live at home? _____No _____Yes, List their ages_____

Do you have other persons/family members who live in the home? _____No _____ Yes _____(specify)

A1. What is your highest level of education completed?
___Elementary school ___High School ___ College/Trade School
___Some high school ___ Some College/Trade School ___ Graduate School

A2. What is your personal yearly income?
___Below $20,000 ___$ 21,000-40,000 ___$ 41,000-75,000 ___above $75,000

A3. How many hours a week currently, do you work outside the home?
___ 1-10 ___ 11-30 ___ 31-40 ___Over 40 ___ Do not work outside the home

A6. Are you a member of a church? ___Yes ___No

A7. With what religious faith do you identify?_____

A 8. Have you participated in personal psychotherapy or couple therapy <u>while in this couple relationship</u>? (check those that apply)
_____ currently in personal psychotherapy _____ previously in personal psychotherapy
_____ currently in couples therapy _____ previously in couple therapy

Contact Information
Couples Study

Please provide contact information so that we may reach you for possible follow-up information.
(voluntary—will be stored separately from the information you provide)

Family #_____ (for research project to complete) Date Interviewed _____

My name _____

My phone number _____

My addresss_____
Street Address or PO Box City State Zip

Another person who will know how to reach you (if you move)

name _____

phone number _____

addresss_____
Street Address or PO Box City State Zip

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT

LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY
School of Science and Technology

INFORMED CONSENT
Contemporary Couples Study

Purpose and Procedures
Contemporary couples face many challenges in our rapidly changing society. You are invited to participate in a research study about the real-life experiences of couples. Our aim is to build a collection of stories that will help us better understand what couples think about their relationships and how they are managing their lives together. This collection will provide a repository of information that can be accessed for scholarly study regarding families.

Your participation will involve an interview lasting approximately 1½ hours. The interview will take the form of a guided conversation about your marriage--what is important to you and how you deal with day-to-day issues. The purpose of the interview is for us to learn through your eyes. No assessment regarding the quality of your relationship will be made and no advice or suggestions will be offered. The interviews will be voice-recorded. As you have been advised, we will also be interviewing your partner.

Risks
The risks to you are the possibility that some issues may be raised that make you or your partner uncomfortable or that you do not want to discuss.

Benefits
While participation in this study may be of no direct personal benefit to you, the potential benefit to society is great. What we learn from you will help other couples enhance their relationships and better solve problems. However, most participants in previous studies have reported that discussion of their relationship with a third person was interesting and helpful to them.

Participants Rights
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to choose what information you reveal. You may decline to answer a question, stop the tape-recorder, or terminate the interview at any time. Stopping the interview will in no way affect any counseling you may currently be receiving through the Department of Counseling and Family Sciences or may elect to receive in the future.

Initial_____

Date_____

Loma Linda University
Adventist Health Sciences Center
Institutional Review Board
Approved 7/24/12 Void after 7/23/2013
#57269 Chair R L Rasmussen

A Seventh-day Adventist Institution
DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING AND FAMILY SCIENCES, DOCTORAL PROGRAMS | Loma Linda, California 92350
(909) 558-4547 *ext* 47003 · *fax* (909) 558-0417 · www.llu.edu

Confidentiality
All personal information revealed in the interview will be held in strict confidence. Your names will be deleted from the transcriptions of the tapes. After transcription, the tapes will be destroyed. In our analysis of the interviews, you will be known only by a number or pseudonym. All identifying material will be purged when quotes or case examples are used in the presentation or publication of study results.

Costs
There is no cost to you for participating in the study.

Reimbursement
You will not be paid for participating in the study.

Impartial Third Party Contact
If you wish to contact an impartial third party not associated with this study regarding any question or complaint you may have about the study, you may contact the Office of Patient Relations, Loma Linda Medical Center, Loma Linda, CA 92354, phone (909)558-4647 for information and assistance.

.....

Informed Consent Statement
I have read the contents of the consent form and have listened to the verbal explanation given by investigator. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I hereby give voluntary consent to participate in this study. Signing this consent document does not waive my rights nor does it release the investigators, institution or sponsors from their responsibilities. I may call Carmen Knudson-Martin, PhD, at 909-558-4547 if I have additional questions or concerns.

I have been given a copy of this consent form

_____ _____
Signature of Subject Date

I have reviewed the contents of the consent form with the person signing above. I have explained potential risks and benefits of the study.

_____ _____ _____
Signature of Investigator Phone Number Date

Loma Linda University
Adventist Health Sciences Center
Institutional Review Board
Approved 7/24/12 Void after 7/23/2013
57269 Chair R L Rigsby MD